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Squaw Élouise

By
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Elouise

"WHOM THE GODS LOVE,"

This to the loved memory of

Our Friend,

"SIR KNIGHT,"

and the dear days of which he was a part.

AUGUST 17, 1891,

Alexander A. Bidston,

KNOWN TO HIS BROTHERS IN ART

AS

ALDRICH KNIGHT,

ACTOR.

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SQUAW ÉLOUISE.

CHAPTER I.

CAMP DIVERSIONS.

THE soft kisses of spring-time winds along the Columbia had melted the last fringe of ice from brooks and rivers, bound so tightly by the winter past; now and then the far thunder of avalanches in the Selkirks beat through the softened air, and told of changes in the snow king's domains up there in high ravines, whose shadows show so soft a violet above the clouds.

Where Tumwata Creek (the creek of the Cascades) joins the River Columbia, between Farwell and the Rapids of Death, the Indians of old pulled ashore their dug-outs or "garpoint" canoes, and made themselves a camp for their hunting season. Sometimes they brought with them their good friends, the French, who trapped and hunted in the same region, and took to themselves wives in the Indian villages south of the Arrow lakes. Sometimes, too, those adopted children of the tribes learned secrets of the soil and of wondrous metals hidden beneath the crust of the Gold Range and the Selkirk Spurs.

In time, those hidden magnets of the mountains were heard of in the eastern provinces and on the Pacific Coast, and strange motley assemblies moved upward on the water,

pitching their tents through the short summer wherever a show of color bewitched them.

And so, when the mine called the Little Rock was struck, only a few miles above, and sold to a speculator of the States, who changed the name to the Little Dell, and also sent an engineer to push the work—when all these interesting things came to pass, the site of the old Indian resting-place was settled on as a good social center for the workers of independent claims, as well as those from the big mine, and the traveler passing up and down their only thoroughfare to the outer world.

A half-dozen cabins were scattered in a straggling line along the foot of the hill, facing the creek. Some of them were a year old, others of more recent structure; only one had the bark stripped from the logs by wind and weather. It had been the germ of High-Low. It was said the Indians had so named the camp after watching with much interest a fascinating game with which the earliest miners from the States had begun their evenings. They had also conscientiously added "Jack and the Game," but the name seemed top-heavy for the size of the bearer, and only the first two words were adopted by the citizens of the sylvan hamlet—not exactly the peace-begirt abode of innocence, as one is likely to suppose a hamlet should be, if we could judge from the life lived there between the last of May and the first of November. During the other months travel was a difficult matter, and labor was at a standstill until the warm sun came again.

Now the warm sun had arrived for its season, and its coming had steeped the silent valley of the Tumwata in the spring fever of June.

From one long log building—the beginning of High-Low—arose the only signs of activity. It was the storehouse, the saloon, the trading-post, and the hotel for as

many as could sleep on the floor and the tables. It was also the place where the mail was to be found, if any came up through Farwell in semi-periodical dug-outs.

An inviting legend for time-killers was displayed in crude lettering outside the door, while from within was heard the sound of several voices, and fervent prayers arose to a god not "too great or good for human nature's daily food," as several participants in *itlokum* —the game of "hand"—seemed to look on him as a silent partner in their gambling, and would demand, with slight ceremony, blessings on one fellow's luck, or the ban of damnation on the chances of the other fellow.

The shadows grew longer, and the straggly settlement seemed to arise toward the dark instead of the dawn. Some miners came, riding mules helter-skelter through the little stream; some half-breed women of unhandsome exterior, and no lack of dirt on their apparel, thrust their heads from one shanty sleepily, and grinned and grimaced at the new arrivals in a manner particularly inviting, for which they received some remarks more forcible than flattering, and which spoke little for the gallantry of the neighborhood, since they were at present the only located residents of the gentle sex that the little outpost could boast of.

Two young men walked together away from the "hotel." One of them halted as they reached the rise of the mountain—a boyish chap, with the bronze of red blood in his cheeks, but with curly hair.

"Dang it, Milt, I've a notion to go back!"

"I won't," decided "Milt," moodily—"if I do I'll get drunk; I feel like cutting the whole country an' getting back East."

"Oh, pshaw! she's all right, you bet!" answered the other, hopefully; "that last letter she sent was slow comin'.

but it got here. Now don't get off yer feed just account o' missin' a letter one mail—it'll come next one."

"May be she's sick—or else the baby."

"Naw! you'd get telegraphed instead of wrote if it was that. Now quit a frettin', you old fool, Milt. Why that young man'll jest come trampin' into the shack some o' these odd-come-shorts a packin' his mammy's duds on his back. How much you say he weighed?"

The question was asked as if entire forgetfulness had swept that important amount from his mind, and Milt took from his pocket a much-read letter and for the hundredth time told the story.

"Nine pounds and seven ounces, Redney; that's something of a baby now!"

"An' nigh three months old. He ought to double his weight in that time if he's any good," said Redney, "an' be able to strike the beam at twenty by the time he hits the breeze of our ledge."

"Poor little Nannie—it's a rough place to ask her to follow a man," and the speaker turned and looked down into the ravine where the shanties were. "If there was even one white woman—one decent woman—in the place, it wouldn't be so bad; but the cursed squaws—"

"Say, did you spot the 'princess?' She's back."

"Yes; saw her feet sticking out of a blanket. I suppose she is drunk there at Antoine's place; but I didn't see the girl."

"Sold her, may be," hazarded Redney. "The 'princess' is of that stripe, I reckon. Yet do you know these scrub Indians treat that old hag better than they do each other. I got the word from a Selkirk man that they say she is of their old king blood. It's been many a year, I guess, since they had a kingdom."

"Her only idea of a scepter is a whisky-bottle," returned

the older man. "I can't discover any royal traits in either her or that owl-eyed slip of a girl that used to loaf around here with her."

"She could fight royally if you riled her," grinned the boy.

"Yes—say, was that Neil Dunbar who rode in with that gang from the mine? He looked as if he had an outfit with him. Reckon he's going to pull up stakes?"

"Hard tellin'; an' you come trampin' away in such a fit o' cranks that I didn't get to see anyone or anything."

"Oh, shut your growling and go back if you've a mind to, you kid!" said his friend good-naturedly. "You always want to see the circus and the band-wagon go past."

"I'd like to have as good a berth as Dunbar's leavin' behind him if he *is* bound for across the line;" and Redney's tones were covetous.

"May be he's got a wife left in the settlements," suggested Milt, with a ready reason for a man leaving the hills.

"Naw; he don't look noways married," decided Redney, "an' he's too light-hearted."

And with that unconscious plea for celibacy he went upward through the giant spruces beside the man whose thoughts and longings were away in the East, held by the tiny hands of a child unseen, and centered in the wish for the little wife he had come to find wealth for. Redney was right, may be. The husband carried no such light heart as the bachelor's left behind there. Love levies heavy taxes on his subjects, taxes paid with aching hearts often, even while one strives through blinding tears to follow in the way he has gone—He!—the king supreme—in his season.

But down below there the care-free ones were growing gently hilarious in the near death of the day, for the sun was going down, slipping over toward the Coast Range and thence over the gray sea to the abode of far-off mysteries—the land of the Orient.

So boisterous did they become that even the castle of Antoine proved all too small for their needs, and a mummy-like form in a blanket was rolled off a bench just outside the door that the wearied might find rest by turning it to their own use, which they did, resting themselves in reposeful attitudes and betting on what would emerge from the blanket.

Some grunted oaths came first—Chinook oaths, varied and awful.

"Hello! it's the princess," admonished one of the accursed with a most earnest air of surprise. "Gentlemen, you have mistaken your party. You fancied it some scrub Siwash on a drunk, while it is really a princess of the blood royal sunk in a reverie. You should all get down on your bended knees, but I'm afraid you're too drunk to get up again, so if your gracious highness will pardon—"

Her gracious highness scrambled to a sitting position in the dust of the road, and turned eyes blearedly diabolical up to the mocking face that was so handsome.

"You? *Diaub—lalah! Nah!*" (devil—fool).

"Come, come, my princess, Talapus, your deity, has sent you a bad dream. Yes, it is I come back to see you. Will we drink?"

"*Klatawah!*"

"Go away? No—no; *lum* have, much *lum*" (rum).

The lady in the road grunted.

"*Luketchee* (clams) many," he continued enticingly.

And finally, after several persuasions, the royal personage, La Mestina (the one of medicines or charms), by descent the princess, slipped out of her blanket and, in the face of many grins, slouched in to the counter at the heels of the handsomest man in the diggings.

"Lord—lord! but she's gone down," remarked Bob Nichols, the mail-carrier and courier in general for the valley.

"Only ten years ago that old bloat wa'n't far off bein' good-lookin'—come nigher to it than any squaws I see. Reub Hart—he owned her. He came out o' the Palouse country. That girl that she has is his, an' he used to keep them pretty decent. Then he reformed an' married a widder down in the States, an' shuffled the squaw off his hands, an' La Mestina has took whisky for her medicine ever since; an' I allow the young one does too."

"Naw!" contradicted a rather thick tongue; "that brat works an' grubs around like a boy—fights like one too—but no rum."

And then polite conversation having become uninteresting and dry, the bench was gradually forsaken—by some for supper, by others for the temptations under the roof of Antoine.

It was yet forsaken when, through the sunset light, a form came down the valley that looked strangely out of place in the noise of carousal and rough words—a tall form, with a semi-Indian face, and wearing the dress of a priest.

The tousle-headed half-breed women drew within their doors as he approached. One or two men he spoke to, calling them by name. One of them, a Canadian-Frenchman, greeted him as Brother Henri, and a certain air of respect tinged the manner of the people he met, possibly induced by the office he filled, but more probably by the athletic frame, as straight, as vigorous as the giant spruces whose murmurs had been his cradle-song.

Much of the "native" seemed expressed by the very way he trod the earth and received greetings from those alien wealth-seekers. At the door of Antoine's he paused, checked by a movement and a low "*winipie!*" the Indian boy who followed him with a pony, and, leaving them there, entered alone the building containing as much of lawlessness as is generally gathered together on the frontier.

Not that the proprietor was rough or lawless himself. His smile, as he came forward to greet "*Mon ami—Fra Henri*," was the smile of a courtier—impressive, flattering, and flattered.

But the French blood of Fra Henri had lent him little of its urbane *camaraderie*. Briefly as an Indian he cut through those conciliating utterances.

"No, Antoine, no wine; nothing from you for myself; but over the hills there—far back—disease is loose, borne on the winds. I want medicines of these," and he motioned to some glass jars that filled the apothecary-shelf of the establishment, "and rum—the best. We go at once."

"Ah! but it is all of one pity! It is weeks, whole weeks, since you have once made entrance to our valley, and now you go in the great haste, and never await the suppair, the *fête*, if you but will, that I, Antoine Leclerc, so long your friend, would be proud to offer."

"The people—my people—await across the mountain the medicines;" and Antoine, never ceasing his chattering, complied at once with the order in the tone and gathered together the articles needed as they were pointed out to him.

"*Your* people—ah! you say so; that is your pity for them; *oui*, it is gracious, that pity. But we are of your people also—yes, much, *mon ami*. You are of the French *père* more than of the Indian *mère*—certain, unmistakable—I tell it to you—I, who have so well been acquaint with you for the years—*oui, oui*—the years before the church—the saints guard!—did claim to you—the years before you did leave the *wayhut et lapiege* (the trail and the trap); and I, Antoine—"

"I do not forget—you are of my father's race—yes, may be; but the mother's race needs me—"

He interrupted himself at sight of a figure in the far corner who blinked at him with heavy, stupid eyes. It was

the "princess," enthroned on a box which was nailed about five feet from the floor, too far from it for her to attempt a descent in her present rather hazy condition, and totally deserted by the courtiers who had enthroned her there; and over their heads and across the gambling-table she was leering at Fra Henri.

"La Mestina!"—and the dark face of the priest grew stern—"here"—and his keen eyes swept every corner of the long room as if in search of some other. "I thought she was in the south hills."

"Until to-day—only to-day," explained Antoine, "and then she come—what you call with your people—*klahowyum* (poor, miserable); now she rest—she refresh herself; you see?"

Fra Henri did. He had seen before his informant ceased speaking and had crossed the room.

"Where is Élouise?" he asked the enthroned, and she turned her eyes drowsily around the place.

"*Wake yakwa*" (not here), she answered a bit sullenly, as if not pleased with the fact stated.

A look of relief lit up the man's face; drove some of the sternness out of his eyes.

"That is right, La Mestina; never, never here. You understand? And you too should go back to the hills—they are best."

"Ugh!" and the lady on the box straightened up angrily and then collapsed, muttering in Chinook, "For dogs and priests, may be; I am princess."

"Come," he said, "listen to me. You remember when we talked last; it was of Élouise and the church. She is almost a woman now, and must no longer do work, as she used to do, for the miners and men here. She was a child then, but now—. In our convent across the mountain there is room for her; when is she to go to it?"

The "princess" understood, and leered good-humoredly at the earnest face.

"If you, Henri, son of Mercier the Frenchman, had not covered yourself with the dress of a squaw, you would find other place for a girl than with the black robes; your father knew better. How much money you carry?"

He smiled a little, showing her an empty purse; Antoine had received its contents.

"Then go your ways," and she kicked at him ineffectually; "go to your prayers. If the church wants Élouise, it is rich, it can pay. If *you* want her—"

"We never buy converts—we win them," he interrupted; and she grinned.

"Well, I'll sell you a chance to win her for *tahla*" (dollar), she said, and looked pleased as his face paled.

"I will talk to her, not you," he said, sternly; "not now. I go to the sick, where you should go too—you were of *Lamestin* (medicine) once; and to the child I will talk when this work is done."

The princess nodded grotesquely, like some grinning Indian devil enthroned there.

"*Mika klap elip yahka*" (you'll find her first), she muttered, and sat looking contemplatively after the priest as he followed Antoine out of the door where the pony was being loaded with his purchases; and ere the dusk had quite fallen he had left the dust of High-Low, and plunged into the spruce along the trail, shadowy and odorous.

And then the ruminations of the princess found vent in a series of short, sharp squalls, through which the habitues tried to continue their amusements and failed. Some sulphurous remarks were flung at her, but they checked not a particle the din she was raising. The princess wanted to get down, and depended on her musical voice to accomplish her desires.

It did. The handsome young fellow who had coaxed her in staggered to his feet (the *lum* glasses had been filled so many times), and staggered more under the royal weight as he lifted her to the floor.

"You're a nice little woman, princess," he remarked, with much of reverie and more of sleepiness in his eyes; "but I never am able to doubt the reality of a personal devil when you're around. Now *clear out!*"

CHAPTER II.

A GAME.

Two hours later the curly-haired Redney proved his partner's truth by again slipping down to High-Low to see all of the crowd or commotion near their hill life. But used as he was to unusual things, he gave a whistle of surprise at the scene before him.

The princess had not gone far when dismissed—not so far but that she had already returned, and beside her a girl with the Indian color showing through her face, and the face itself, and the eyes of it, darkened and flashing with a pent-up fury.

"*Ikt tahla!*" (one dollar), the princess was saying, and then Redney saw a drunken miner leer at the girl, and lay a round silver dollar in the hand of the princess in exchange for a slip of paper drawn from a covered box. Several slips of paper were held in the fingers of men who were laughing, and as many *tahlas* reposed in the brown hand of the princess.

"And why not," smiled Antoine to Redney's amazed questioning of this new trick of gambling. "What man here would give to the girl a harder life than to live with the princess? It is so I look, it is so I make decision in my mind, when they did speak of the raffle—and you see?"

Antoine himself held one of the small numbered slips. It was not the first squaw the boy had seen sold or traded—life on the North Pacific Slope holds many such revelations; but his young face flushed as he met the eyes of the girl who stood in that circle of half-drunken exiles from civilization—a young slave questioning mutely the faces among which was one who would claim her as master. And among them all, not one sober enough to appeal to—if appeal was in her thoughts.

Redney did not know, but he wished he knew how many chances there were and he had money enough to cover them, but he could not. House-furnishing takes money, and many resplendent things in their shack had been bought by Redney in honor of that wife and babe belonging to his partner. Two dollars were all that jingled in his pocket; and, shamed though he felt, they were added to the store of La Mestina, who grunted and laughed as she looked at the boy blushing so furiously.

"Hello, Hop-o-my-thumb! you dealing in live-stock these days?" hiccoughed a big giant of a miner good-naturedly. "But that's all right, sonny; put up your money like a little man, and then," he added, "may be you'll get her; luck generally does go to just such pretty-faced whipper-snappers where women are concerned. But I'm your friend, my boy, I'm—"

Then sleep tied his tongue, while Redney edged out of the crowd, and heard the princess call "High-yih!" as she spied, over the heads of the others, the tall young fellow who bade her "clear out" not so long before.

With the lateness of the evening his face had gained an added flush, and was a marked contrast to a quiet-looking, pale-faced man who came in with him, and who had drank only mild drinks, while *lum* was the standard drink for the rest of the crowd.

He laid a restraining hand on the arm of the other as the princess called.

"You don't want any of that, Dunbar," he said contemptuously. "A squaw up for sale—keep clear of the case; and if we're to finish that game—"

"Oh, see here, this isn't *a* squaw; it's little squaw Élouise, my errand-boy long ago."

And then he pushed through the crowd; and Redney, seeing the girl's face brighten, her eyes shine as with gladness, looked for the reason. He saw only the cool-eyed gambler, who was a stranger to him, and Neil Dunbar, laughing and victorious over a late game, and heartlessly jocular over La Mestina's method of disposing of her family.

"Hi! you old Indian witch, what devilment is it you want my help in—to buy a ticket? How many you got? And you, you young slip of royalty, is it you that is to be the prize? That's droll. Why, it was only yesterday you ran errands and blacked my boots—or was it last year? You've grown taller, anyway—a dollar's worth taller?"

But he bought the ticket, the only one left. The girl had not answered his greeting, but turned away her face—a bit of possible sulkiness that angered the princess, who caught her and attempted to twist her head around to the gaze of the audience; and in the scowling resistance, the poor dress she wore was torn—stripped from one shoulder and arm, showing the creamy skin and girlish form to the waist—an accident that restored the maudlin good-humor of the princess, who laughed. Most of the others were too tipsy to comment; but the gambler noted the two tickets in Redney's fingers.

"Say, young fellow," he said, carelessly, "I'll just take those tickets off your hands, and double your money for your bargain."

The young fellow looked into the speculative eyes that rested on the girl, who was striving to re-adjust the rags over the arm that was less thin and sinewy than that of the average Indian.

"The tickets ain't for sale," he growled.

"Give you five apiece for them."

"You couldn't buy them for a hundred;" and Redney turned on his heel and walked away. The gambler and himself were the only sober men in the place, and the boy was ashamed of the whole scene. He was half angry, too, at the eager way in which the girl Élouise watched Neil Dunbar, though she did not speak to him.

Neil Dunbar—"Gentleman Neil," as he had heard him called—handsome, good-natured, charming; a man whom men liked and women loved, and for what? Few were the people to whom he had ever been of actual benefit in life; yet the frank gaze of his blue-gray eyes, or the clasp of his hand, had won him many a friend; the caressing tendencies of his voice, and a few non-committal whispers, had won him many a love. But to none did he seem bound closely, since for over a year he had lived in the Chinook region. With the crowd sometimes, when the isolated life would make *lum* a temptation, but not of them at other times, keeping ever that little line drawn that marks the man of opportunities from the unlearned mass, but doing it in so gracious a way that never an enemy was made, only the *sobriquet* of "gentleman" given him and glances won, such as irritated Redney as he looked at the girl Élouise.

"Hang it! she's no better than the rest, may be," and he looked discontentedly at the tickets that bespoke two chances for her among twenty-five; "and that Dunbar's half-shot now. Pshaw! she deserves to be sold."

An un-Indian-like eagerness filled the girl's manner, though she said never a word, as Antoine held one numbered slip in his hand and the other buyers thrust theirs forward for comparison, the mate of the numbered ticket winning the prize.

"I myself have not got it, not so near as ten numbers; no, nor you, Roberts; nor you, Redney, with both your papers; nor you, nor you!"

How Élouise strained eyes and ears for each shade of comment that would end the matching! It seemed an hour that Antoine laughed there with them and poured drinks for the losers, and then, at a word from his companion, Dunbar, who had evidently forgotten he held a ticket, staggered up.

"Here we are, gentlemen; 'xcuse me if I kept you waiting in your grand lottery drawing; here's my ticket. I paid the last dollar on the princess apparent, and the last dollar wins."

"It does do so, indeed, Monsieur," and Antoine laid beside it the matched card. "It is the thirteen, which is called unlucky, but to you it brings the good luck—the squaw Élouise."

The girl's face grew white as Dunbar turned to her laughing.

"A nice addition you are to a man's outfit just when he's taking a trail back to the world," he remarked. "Come here. You don't belong to 'her royals' there any longer; don't be afraid. Will you come with me?"

"Élouise is not afraid now," she said, with a prouder look on her face, a face that had something like content in it.

"Don't believe you are," he said; "living with Satanas must make strong nerves. Don't know what I'm to do with you, Élouise, 'pon my soul I don't, unless I get a boy's outfit for you and call you Louis; that might do, hey,

Antoine—only you're too pretty for a boy, much too pretty. What do you say, Cleve?" (this to the clear-eyed gambler near him). "It makes a heap of trouble for a man when they're too pretty."

And then, as the gainer of the prize, he was called on to treat the crowd. The prize herself slipped away into a corner, unnoted by her owner and seemingly uncared for by the princess, who dribbled the price of her from one hand to the other contentedly, not even missing the belt-knife Élouise had deftly stolen from her in the commencement of the raffle, and which she yet held fearfully in the breast of the blouse she wore, doubtful, perhaps, of successfully keeping it if the maternal mind turned toward its loss.

But Redney had noted the petty thieving, considering it a bit of a virtue to steal from that keen-eyed Satan, as Dunbar had called her; and then his quick sympathy for her was forgotten in watching the games commenced, one between the stranger called Clevents and Dunbar, who shuffled the cards, gayly elated with his luck, and confident of luck to come.

"Lay out your '*tahlas*,' Mr. Clevents; I'm waiting for them, and have an idea that I could win the stars out of heaven to-night."

The gambler looked at him and smiled. The flushed face and eyes, feverish from Antoine's liquor-store, were not the signs of a winner in a play of science, and for a player to hoodoo his own game by boasting of high luck was another folly. Mr. Clevents knew better than that.

And the truth of that old gambling superstition was proven by the money that after the first game—ah! that first game that brings hope!—went steadily across the table and away from Dunbar's hand, that grew more and more unsteady with every loss and the drinks that followed.

"We'll quit now, if you say so," said the gambler obligingly, as he slipped the gains into his pocket, knowing that there was little left to win.

"No, sir, you don't!" objected the other with the stubbornness of the whisky asserting itself; "the last dollar wins, I tell you! Where's that Indian I won? The last dollar—that's where my luck lies, and you owe me a chance to get even, Mr.—Mr. Cleve. Lord! how my head aches. Give me another drink! There's the rest of it," and he emptied his pockets on the table; "count it, you little fellow; I'll do as much for you some day. How much? Thirteen dollars—thirteen? Cover that, then, Mr. Cleve, and here goes for luck!"

The gambler hesitated; not a bad sort of a fellow and not wanting to strip a man.

"Go 'head," said one of the bystanders; "give a man a chance to get his money back."

And Mr. Clevents did so. The thirteen, with that last dollar among them, were covered, the cards, with fate in them, portioned out, and at the finale it was again the slender, finely-formed hand of the gambler that had reached out for the stakes.

"Satisfied?" he asked. "Tell you what I'll do; give you back a fifty to play against someone else if you promise it won't be played against me."

Dunbar shook his head at the stipulation founded on a time-honored superstition.

"No, I don't; *you're* the man I want to play, do you see? and I'm played out, I reckon, ain't I?" He looked at his fingers and laughed tipsily. "I used to wear a ring that might have backed me, ditto watch, but I don't see them now, gentlemen, do you? No; a girl down the Palouse country made love to that ring—girls were scarce down there—and she got it. Not a d—d ounce of jewelry have I at—"

Then his hand, mechanically raised to his throat, touched something that checked his speech.

"Yes, I have, too," he continued, and a bit of slender gold chain was dragged above his open collar. "I've got—"

In a corner of the room far away from him, but where her eyes could rest on his face, the Indian girl was crouched looking at him—looking at him; and as he raised his eyes he saw her. "I've got you," he added; and the chain with its pendant was dropped again under its cover. "Come here, Élouise; let me see how much money I can win with you. There she is, Cleve; if you'll start her at a hundred, we'll play."

"Pshaw!" you can buy squaws all along the coast for less than that," remarked one of the men, and the gambler, hearing him, smiled.

"May be, but not a princess of royal blood," he said coolly. "I'll do it, Dunbar; there's your ducats."

Other games were forgotten for the moment, and the men gathered around to watch this final one with a bit of humanity among the stakes.

"What's up?" asked a tall man, peering over the heads of the others into the circle, and a half-breed trapper from the south country answered in Chinook:

"The man from the mines won the squaw; now he gambles her against the stranger's money."

And the girl, who had come at her master's bidding, stood close beside the speaker. She had not known why she was called, nor understood the words of the two gamblers; but she heard the words of the trapper, and her hand grasped quickly the back of her master's chair. She understood now.

"That cursed squaw has eyes like augers," said one man who was across the table from her, and on whom her eyes

were resting, though seeing nothing. "She's pretty white, but the devil in her eyes is a red one."

And then the game went on close to her, but she saw nothing of it. She never moved; she seemed scarcely to breathe; but when the trapper spoke, one hand had gone quickly to her blouse, where the knife was hidden, and remained there.

Then there was the thud on the table of the last play, a long breath from the watchers that said the game was over, and the gambler arose and looked across at Élouise.

"I guess you go with me this trip," he said pleasantly; but the girl drew back, with her eyes turned to her master, and such a world of beseeching in them!

"Yes, he's right; won you, you know," explained the loser drowsily. "I'm sorry, but you go along; he's all right—you go."

He turned in his chair, laying a persuasive hand on her arm, pushing her toward the stranger.

And then a shrill cry of rage rang through the room; a gleam of steel flashed up from her bosom as she stood between the two men, and then it was turned against, not the stranger she shrank from, but deep down into the shoulder of the man she had watched with worshiping eyes.

Someone caught her arm as the knife was drawn out, dripping, and turned toward her own throat. And there were shouts and oaths, general crowding and confusion, amidst which she glided like a snake from her captor's hands, but only to be grasped by the boyish-looking fellow who had thought she deserved to be sold.

She tried to escape from him, but his grip was like steel. In the struggle they drew away from that table where the man lay, as they said, dead.

Suddenly the boy muttered, in the jargon she knew: "There is the side door; go through the stable and up the cliff. You're plucky, anyway. Now go!"

And as she darted through the door she stepped on and wakened the princess, who was sleeping the sleep of the weary, stretched out along the wall.

CHAPTER III.

A LETTER.

ANOTHER week had gone by, and by chance another mail had been borne upon a passing garpoint—a mail of two letters, one for Milton Ewing, who pushed his way to the door, followed by Redney, and, once free from the others, opened the envelope they had both waited for.

“Well?” said the boy, impatiently, as Ewing, after a glance, gave a low whistle of surprise and pleasure, then a sorrowful “Well, well, that’s *too* bad!” and then, turning the page to look at the heading, he arose hastily.

“By Jove! she’s been there three days, and worried half crazy, I’ll bet. Well, I’ll just start to-night.”

“Likely to take time to leave your address behind?” asked his partner, sarcastically; and Milt laughed, with elated, excited eyes.

“You kid!” he said, with contemptuous fondness in his voice, “you can’t be expected to understand the feelings of a family man. Nannie’s coming—is down at Farwell, poor little girl. Met some nice folks, she says, one of them a young lady—a young *lady*, Redney. Ever see one? Not in this basin, I’ll swear. Her party is bound for this region. Name Raeforth. Raeforth? Ain’t that one of the partners in the ‘Little Dell’ mine? I thought so. And Nannie fell in with them at some junction across in God’s

country. Lucky she did. And instead of going on to Portland, as had been planned, this girl, Miss Raeforth, concludes to come up here sight-seeing, since she finds another woman is coming; and, listen to this, Redney, 'Is it true, Milt, that there are *no white women at all* up at High-Low?'"

Redney whistled and looked at Milt out of the corner of his eye.

"There's 'Dutch Liz,'" he hazarded, "or your friend 'Piano Lou.'"

"Stop it! You've got no more 'savvy' than to make a break like that before Nannie, and—and she might think you meant it," he wound up, lamely enough, and with his face flushing under Redney's delighted eyes.

"I do mean it," he grinned—"so did old 'Piano.' She asked why you never come in, and sent word she liked white blond men."

"Oh, break away, can't you! Women say lots of things to kids that they wouldn't want men to hear."

"Ugh, ugh!" agreed the boy with an Indian grunt, "and one or two things to men that they wouldn't want kids to hear."

"Hello!" broke out Milt again, turning to the written page. "How's this? 'I've an idea that Della—Miss Raeforth—has a sweetheart up there in the mines. She talks of him a good deal, but hasn't seen him for two years. His name is Dunbar, and if you should happen to know him, it would be nice to have him come with you and surprise Della.'"

"Della will find her surprise all in shape," said the boy, heartlessly; "and then we'll all have to take turns sitting up with Della, same as with Gentleman Neil."

"You never liked that man, did you, Redney?" asked the older man; and the boy's lip curled.

"Like—like? I don't know. I was glad when the girl cut him, anyway;" and with the deep wrinkle between his brows, Redney looked another person from the joking "kid" who was his partner's comfort and torment. "I wouldn't a pined away any if she'd killed him."

"I guess that's what she struck for," said the other, and then paused at a cabin where a man sat smoking at the door.

"How's your patient, Collins—crazy yet?"

"How is he? Well, I'll be ——!" and the bans that might be spoken against Mr. Collins by the "powers that be" are unwritable. "Hain't you fellows heard?"

"Heard nothing; what is it?" demanded the kid.

"He skipped last night, slipped the noose some way, an' I'll be —— if he ain't gone!"

"But he couldn't go far," debated Ewing.

"That's what I says," affirmed Mr. Collins. "I says—gentlemen, may be I might a had a pretty good load on last night; I ain't a swearin' different, I'll be —— if I am; an' I might a slep' sounder than usual in consequence. But s'pose I did lay here on the step all night, an' s'pose he did, in some o' his flighty turns, walk out over me, where's he a walkin' to? That's what I'm askin'. Him, with a bad cut that may break open any time, an' his head so flighty with the fever yesterday that I wa'n't noways sure he's to get out of it alive after all."

Redney glanced at the tumbling waters of the creek that belted the cliff.

"Yes, we looked there; ain't along it unless he's floated down the Columbia. He couldn't walk far in his kelter, though he was crazy to get out o' the door every time my peepers was off him. I've been worried to death thinkin' of him, a starvin', may be, an' not havin' sense to know what ails him."

"You look it," remarked Redney; and then, "What does that man Clevents say about it?"

"Ain't here; left Monday. Acted like a white man, too, about Dunbar; I'll be —— if he didn't! Paid out money without a word for two weeks' nursin' to come—said he'd float up here again by that time. He's got a heart in him!"

Redney was poking along the side of the cabin where the one window was. Inside of the little square was the bunk the wounded man had used, and his inquisitive young eyes glanced around and returned again to the soil without that had attracted his eyes first.

"No use smellin' around there, even if you are one-quarter Injun," said the nurse, with contempt for the boy's pretenses. "Do you suppose a man that size could wriggle through that ten by twelve air-hole? Then, I'm tellin' you, he didn't have to; the door was open. Injun blood must always pretend to jugglery," he added, peevishly, to Ewing. "It ain't how he got out but where he's gone that's confusin' this camp. Can you tell us that, you little red devil?"

The boy straightened up and scraped his heavy boot over the soil softened by a rain the evening before.

"I can, but I won't," he said, laconically. "Come along, Milt."

And Milt, nothing loath, did so. Somehow, some way, he must start that evening for Farwell—the old post of the Hudson Bay trappers—the outfitting town for the entire mining region of the Selkirks that stretches far to the north—the old post named by the Indians because of the separations seen there.

But it was little of the separations that the young husband was thinking of, with those glowing eyes, as the two went over the road together, but of a greeting, and the certainty that Nannie and the baby were within a day and a night's ride of him.

So slight a showing was there of the red-skin in the boy who was his partner, that Ewing was apt to forget his fabled ancestry at times, though he never forgot to have faith in the boy's knowledge of woodcraft, which seemed at times subtle and uncanny to the uninitiated.

Remembering it in the midst of his thoughts of Nannie, he halted at the entrance to the one shed for mules that was owned at Indian Spring, and turned to the boy.

"Say, Redney, were you talking straight when you said you could tell where Dunbar had gone?"

"When did I lie to you?" demanded the other, half sulkily; "and what matter where he goes? He's gone to what he deserves, may be. It's nothing to us."

"But the strangers—"

"Oh!—*Della?*" and the young cub uttered the name with a mimicry of affectation. "Well, Della will have to hustle around for some other tenderfoot, and if Della is any good, she'll find plenty o' men to take his place—men, too."

Every available canoe was fifteen miles down the river on a big fishing frolic, and neither pleas nor persuasions could win from the stable more than one horse for the trip there—one "kyuse" to go under the saddle, but no more.

"I'm elected to walk, then, and save my money for shoes," grunted Redney, eying a couple of sick horses that shortened the road allowance. "Why don't you take in your sign, then, an' shoot them crow-baits?"

But ill-temper availed nothing. There wasn't a mule on which Redney could go as best man to meet the bride of his friend. Redney had to stay home and scour up the tin pans and make the shack shine, against the arrival. He would have walked, willingly, but Milt objected.

"You know I wouldn't see you do that, you contrary Red, you!" he said. "If you go, it will mean a walk, time about, with the one horse between us, and I couldn't cover ground near so fast so."

"Go 'long!" adjured his partner, at that view of the case. "Hump yourself, now, and get back in time for grub to-morrow night—I'll have it ready in great shape; and here," as Milt leaped eagerly into the saddle, "just s'pose you get some o' that bakin' powder like they have down there—I'm sick o' saleratus; an' I want a nutmeg—Antoine hasn't any; an' if you've got any dust after you pay expenses, how'd it be to freeze to another blanket—we're like to be short for extra beds. Where do you reckon we'll stick Della?"

The other man gathered up the reins, his lips twitching at the perplexities of his partner.

"Don't know," he said, carelessly. "You're running the boarding-house. My end of the cabin will be full when Joseph Dyce Ewing and his mother come. But the young lady isn't likely to be big, and there's plenty of room in your berth, and I should think—"

A shot fired under the belly of the beast Mr. Ewing was on caused that animal to cavôrt some, in a way that checked the recital of its rider's thoughts, to the delight of Redney, who slipped his revolver back in his pocket, with a grin that belied the frown between his eyes; and having given his partner that parting salute, he climbed up to their cabin, perched above the settlement, and sedately went to work at house-cleaning.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAKES OF THE ARROWS.

SEVERAL days previous an event wonderful occurred to a camp of Indian hunters camped alongside the rapids that celebrate the last run of the independent Kootenai.

Up from toward Fort Shepherd came a whole fleet of canoes, a fleet elongated as they were paddled in single file close to the shore, their dusky steersmen taking advantage of the eddies which the swift downward drive of the center current flings backward in its flight.

But it was not so much the number or the perfection of the fleet as it was the occupants who astonished the natives, and sent little grunts of questions and low-voiced replies around the Indian circle.

They had women of their own with them, but no womanhood their eyes had ever seen was quite like the dainty little creature who came with a laugh over the side of the canoe, and toward them. Back of her came another lady, also young, and with a child in her arms. She walked more sedately, and took advantage of the proffered arm of an elderly, silent gentleman, who gave some orders to the interpreter (a white man, and the least reputable-looking of the lot of employés), and then followed up to the grassy level, where the young girl had already joined some of the earlier arrived of their steersmen, and where she bowed and smiled at an old man who came forward from the door of his lodge—a man bareheaded and with the severe repose of a patriarch in his dark face, a face imposing, but not over-aweing to the young visitor, who smiled again at his one

English word of "welcome," and nodded acceptance of it, and gazed about at the rest of the little camp, the members of which returned her scrutiny with interest. Only the few squaws would look at her with shy, wondering eyes, and turn swiftly away if she caught them at it; and then, with their backs half-turned, they would converse in the gentle tones native to them, using few words but many gestures of their expressive hands, and stealing ever and anon a glance at the new-comers, at the white baby, but, above all, the small, dainty figure of the girl who laughed and nodded and smiled at the people about her like some gold-crowned singing-bird that had strayed out of its course and into the midst of sober russet and workaday hued birds of prey, and fearing them not at all, or else trusting her powers of fascination to insure her a path of peace among them.

And, in truth, they looked as if she had won it without a word, just as a child does that walks into your garden with baby insolence and laughs at you as it gathers blossoms.

She was like a child in her little tyrannical ways, and the gentleman who followed shook his head and tried to frown on her haste and her ignorance of the subdued manner fashionable among female things of the Indian country.

But she only laughed.

"Now, if you did not know him well, Mrs. Ewing, you might imagine he meant to be very disapproving with that glare in his eyes—it was a glare, Uncle!—but, bless his heart, he don't. He's a little frightened lest they'll want to steal me, may be, but that's all."

The "uncle" was already speaking, through his interpreter, to the tall old man before mentioned, and trying to bargain for some fresh meat for their evening meal, as they were pushing up-stream, with the desire to lose no time in hunting on the way.

The meat, as well as the welcome, was obtained from the

Indians, who were also pushing up to the lakes, but not in much haste. Their chief, Simon of the Colvilles, told the visitors that it was now their season for taking the water to their hunting and fishing grounds, and the trail led where that of the travelers was to go, where many whites had gone in a few months, up toward the "Big Bend" region where the placer-diggings are. Only the Indian hunter did not need to go so far; there are fish in the lakes which really began at the junction of the rivers, where the camp was pitched, and in the Selkirks, but a two days' journey, were found all of wild flesh and mountain sheep their boats would hold.

They had an idea that this white man with the women and "*iktus*" (plunder or baggage) was a new trader going to live the rest of his life in the north country, and looked puzzled and incredulous when told it was but a stay for a few days that was intended, and that the open-eyed young lady was really going just for a pleasure trip.

They had never heard of anything like that. Indian women had gone up into that country, but never a white wife with a white child had floated upward over the Arrow lakes; or, if so, Simon had never heard of it, and he had lived always near the waters of the Columbia, and now was an old man.

"And this child the white stranger's daughter?" asked the chief, and looked kindly on the girl who had entered the Selkirk country for pleasure. At that moment she had the white baby in her arms, and had approached a rather neatly cared-for scion of the Colvilles, aged about one year, and was persistently endeavoring to have them "make up."

And as personal histories and divulged intents were the fashion, Chief Simon learned that it was a niece of the stranger called Raeforth; that he (Mr. Raeforth) was to

visit the diggings south of the Big Bend; that much land there was covered by his name, near by where the trail from the Shuswap country reached the Columbia; that the new diggings near the old trading-place were called the "Little Dell" in honor of the young lady, who was going up to visit her six-months-old namesake, and that in the lower country it was said her name was more than pretty—its mark on paper meant much money—and the uncle was a man of far sight and keen scent for paths that led to the precious metals.

Needless to say that the interpreter—an accommodating person named Cottrell, and called "Cot"—gave his Indian acquaintances more information of that sort than Mr. Rae-forth was aware of, naturally wishing his charges to be estimated at their full value. The little woman with the gray, steadfast eyes and the baby he knew less of, as she had only joined them at the fort below.

But such was the introduction of the white group to the lake country, a very satisfying one to the strangers, who settled comfortably for the night as neighbors of Chief Simon and his hunters; and when the evening meal was spread, with the two parties within speaking distance, the surprise of the strangers was great when a sudden calm fell over the circle of Simon, and turning their attention to the cause of it, they noted the patriarch with bowed head and the same reverence of attitude expressed by his family, while a low, half-whispered monologue from his lips told the others that he was saying grace before meat in Chinook.

"I expected surprises in this region," confessed Miss Rae-forth, "but decidedly not of this sort. Why, this seems the very farthest corner of the world, and those Indians are said to belong in Washington, that seems only newly discovered, and I'd like someone to account for

their religion and their real courtesies, for they are not at all like our average Indian of the States."

"The difference, I suppose, is because the priests long ago thought this field worth working, and worked it," explained her uncle. "The work of the Catholic missions through this region has been something tremendous, and the Colvilles as a nation are devout Catholics, no doubt fulfilling the spirit of their faith more absolutely than the white converts of the cities or settlements."

"Yes," affirmed "Cot," who overheard them, "they are the best reds you're likely to run across; mind their own traps and don't freeze to any other man's; raise their own crops and flour-mills, and keep up their churches, too. Yes, they are all church Indians, and the fellows who are not have a hard row to hoe among them. They kill members for breakin' some o' the moral laws that in a white settlement a lawyer could talk a man clear of."

Mrs. Ewing's face was lighting up wonderfully. "Oh, you don't know how glad I am to have you tell me all this," she confessed, with a little laugh. "I was growing quite hopeless back at The Dalles, for they did tell me there such depressing things about the life of the mining country; in fact, I never should have ventured up here but for you and your kindness," she said, with a fond look at the young girl, who responded promptly, "Same here," and leaned over to give the little wife a hand-pressure in return for the look.

But Mr. Cottrell smiled dubiously at Mrs. Ewing's words.

"Well, now," he advised, "I wouldn't be too much set up on account of this tribe being sort of decent people, for you see *these* are Indians, but when you strike Farwell, or High-Low, or the Big Bend, you won't hear many hymns being sung. You see, Missus, you'll be among white men and half-breeds then, and they are some different."

But it was hard to convince the ladies of that fact. One

of them had a husband up there whom she felt sure would never come second to any Indian in nobility, and the other had someone—was it friend, or sweetheart? She called him "cousin," anyway, and gayly and confidently invested him with all moral attributes possible to masculine human nature, laughing a little as she did so, but hesitating not at all to show that his presence in that locality might have influenced her decision that the Columbia River was worth following toward its source for several days' journey.

"You see," she confided to Mrs. Ewing, "he hasn't been so lucky as I. Men can't save money when they live all over the country as he has been doing, and what money he has made has been for other people—some of it for me, for he advised Uncle of some splendid investments; and, money or no money, he is quite the handsomest man I ever knew, and would be distinguished in any society. Here's his picture, taken when we were engaged. We are the only ones of the family, he and I, though the relationship is not very close; and as I've an idea that he is getting prouder as he gets poorer, I am going to surprise him in his villainy, and tell him it is all nonsense, for he is the dearest fellow alive, and if he's tired of roughing it, he can quit it."

Hence the reason that Mr. Cottrell's statements fell on soil barren of belief. For in those feminine, hero-worshipping hearts reposed an idea that their own particular heroes contained the leaven of virtue equal to the purification of miners more hopeless than those of High-Low. And then, were not even the Indians of the region religious and virtuous? and is not the white man ever his superior?

So, in the quick June twilight that followed the sun, the two enthusiasts talked understandingly of those things, and of the sylvan charms of life in Chinook land, and the unreality of the peaceful scene about the lodges of their dusky neighbors. For Miss Raeforth was for the first time

west of the Mississippi, and Mrs. Ewing for the first time west of the Alleghanies, and the soft-voiced Indians of the lakes were pictures unexpected for them, totally unlike the tribes farther south and east. They were several degrees cleaner, much more progressive in all desirable things, and, above all, they appeared so surprisingly well-to-do.

"Not much like the whisky-polluted wretches at some of the towns along the railroad," said the girl, admiringly, as she noted Simon and Mr. Raeforth in stately converse by the side of the flickering blaze of the camp-fire, and with them Mr. Cottrell, and the Indians of both parties grouped about, taking part in the *wau-wau* (conversation) by the respect of their attention. "No, these people are not a bit like our savages nearer our civilization. They are altogether ideal at a casual glance, and I confess I should like to take more than a casual glance at them. What a frolic it would be to go summer boarding with them; get an Indian dress and make oneself up accordingly—what an experience that would be!"

"No doubt," assented Mrs. Ewing, drily; "and, to complete the romance, you would of course join their church, and marry the favorite son of the chief at the end of the season. I do believe you are simply hungry for an adventure of some sort."

"Have you ever doubted it? I am sure you might have read 'adventuress' on my face the moment you set eyes on me at the Little Dalles. What else do you suppose would start me from a sofa-cushioned home into canoes and tents? But, if you disapprove, you must just scold Neil for my faults; he is responsible for most of them."

But the young wife was not sure she did disapprove. The softly-tinted, childish face, the impulsive manner and romantic fancy, and the addition of a keen, worldly-wise brain when business matters were discussed, made up

a combination new to Mrs. Ewing, and always touching her to kindly appreciation at every new development of the girl's character. Her queer ways all seemed such harmless ones, often generous ones, as the troubled little woman had been given proof of at the trading-post where she was waiting anxiously for word from her husband; and Miss Raeforth, learning the facts, had at once proposed that Mrs. Ewing join the Raeforth party and chaperone the young lady herself on a journey to the place where the desirable husband was located. Otherwise, Miss Raeforth must wait in dismal solitude the return of her uncle, or else continue a lonely journey to the coast and remain there until he saw fit to end his inspection of the Kootenai and Big Bend region. That had really been the plan of travel when they started from home, but the younger Raeforth saw fit to change her plans if she could find a shadow of an excuse, and Mrs. Ewing seemed a very providential shadow of a pretext, and was at once taken advantage of by the young schemer.

"Make extra work and expense? Yes, of course it will," she agreed, airily, when that question was mentioned. "It will take a couple of extra warriors, I suppose, to carry us over the rough places, and some extra blankets and sheets and things, and may be the noble reds will want our weight in gold for the trouble we'll be; but men were made to wait on women, my dear, and dollars were made round so they could roll, and if you'll only agree to come along and keep me in countenance, you need not trouble your head about the pennies."

And so did the two strangers begin a friendship in the northern trading-town, and help each other to enjoy every bit of beauty they passed on the unquiet bosom of the Columbia. But while they had passed several groups of Indians, they had halted for converse with none, though

Mr. Cottrell had informed them that they would surely come up with the people of Chief Simon, who had made a start north, but could not have yet gone beyond the mouth of the Kootenai; and after much questioning, Miss Raeforth learned enough of the old chief to hesitate not at all in saying "*Klahowya?*" to him, her one word of Chinook, while the chieftain himself had just about as extensive knowledge of English.

But the girl decided one did not need to know their language, as she and Mrs. Ewing discussed them, and as the stars came out one by one and sent points of light to temper the deepness, and complete the pictures about the Indian camp. Still, bronze faces picked out in color by the fitful fire, soft tones of content, against which the words of the white men struck with the sound of metal in their voices; and then, from where the squaws had gone to bring some fish from the river, the two watchers heard a song, solemn, yet serene, come over the level to them—a low breath of music sung in childish faith and in English words, for many of their hymns have been translated by the priests, and both renderings sung by them. Listening very closely, they could hear that it was a hymn to a guardian angel, one of praise:

"Oh, angel, ever in my sight,
How lovely must thou be
To leave thy home in heaven to guard
A little child like me."

The weird, pale lights that yet lay against the sky of the north, and the sweet calls of the night-birds that spoke of peace, perhaps intensified the atmosphere of purity that seemed to breathe about them. The breeze from the ancient mystic Lakes of the Arrows wafted to them suggestions of a world undefiled, and the cheery blaze of the camp-fire where the children of the forests gathered, and

the hymn to their guardian angel that sounded tenderly on the night, completed a scene and an impression that stripped Mr. Cottrell's statements of all belief.

"The idea!" said Miss Raeforth, with warm contempt; "that man is simply too stupid to appreciate the influence of these idyllic surroundings—but it can not be possible there are many so callous. Those devout squaws down there make me feel like a miserable sinner. Let us say our prayers and go to sleep."

CHAPTER V.

PAST THE PICTURED ROCKS.

BUT she did not look like a soul very deep in the conviction of sin next morning, as she ran hither and thither in the dewy freshness of the new day, looking herself much like a picture of Aurora, with her disk of golden hair framing her face, and winning her many a gaze from among the dusky neighbors who were astir before the dawn, and were getting out their "garpoint" canoes for half the hunters, who were also going northward over the waters.

Among them went Simon. But the new-comers noticed that never a move made he in preparation; the youths and the squaws could glean what joy they might from the game of labor; Simon was a chief and would have none of it, though he finally arose from his after-breakfast smoke, and, crowned by a cap of swan-skin, walked down to the edge of the water, where he entered the cockle-shell of birch-bark that was his especial conveyance, and led the

fleet like a true chieftain, after indicating that the long canoe of the strangers should come next his.

"Can you imagine yourself in North America and in the nineteenth century?" said the girl, sotto voce. "I feel as part and parcel of the ancient voyageurs of Eastern Canada six generations ago, only we should have left offerings at some saint's shrine by the shore, to insure the safety of our souls and bodies, and, to complete the illusion, Chief Simon should lift up his voice in some French river-song and lead us along by music."

But their leader left all such frivolity to children or squaws, and made a most grave and imposing appearance as he moved steadily, and seemingly with slight effort, onward and upward, over the lower lake, where, in olden times, the mystic rocks of the east shore decided the fortunes of the tribe for the season.

Only when the great wall was reached did Simon halt, holding his canoe motionless and making a gesture to Mr. Raeforth, and then, pointing to the strange face of the rock that rises straight a hundred feet above the shore:

"*Yakwa!*" (here), he said; and then Mr. Cottrell explained that the wall was a thing of unusual interest to the lake country Indians. The night before, Simon had been drawn into speaking of it to Mr. Raeforth, seeming pleased that this sacred place of the old tribes had a fame that had reached far into the white man's country. And the ladies, hearing its legends, looked with renewed interest at the strange cabalistic characters picked in red upon its face. All along the surface small holes, like eyes, peered out at them from the desolation of their abode, whose meaning is forgotten. How often had it looked fatefully to the west over the circles of dusky warriors who chanted their war-songs in its shadows and showered their flights of arrows at its face! How often has it echoed with glad calls, as

the pierced wall held fast the darts they have sped there! But, if their tribute was refused, and a greater part of the arrows could find no cranny to lodge in, and were flung back to drift down the waters, then were seen sad but resigned faces as they gathered the fallen darts which warned them to beware the war-path for that season, as the god of strife would surely lend strength to the enemies who ranged to the east of the lake mountains.

Many other legends have clustered about the pictured rocks marked by mystic hands of the past; but of all the others, this one of the warrior-chants and the fateful arrows is remembered best by the modern tribes, and has given a name to the beautiful sheets of water where the great river grows lazy in its journey and creeps with cool kisses along the pretty beaches or the ancient walls of rock.

"I wonder," said Miss Raeforth, as she glanced at the dark faces, "if, back of their Christian training, there lurks never a bit of pagan prayer as they pass here? If I could only be sure of it, I would be reconciled to so many civilized traits that are upsetting my old ideas of them."

"Are you longing for the excitement of a scalp-dance?" asked Mrs. Ewing. "For my part, I am in a state of wordless gratitude for every proof of their very advanced manner of life here. Milt has never written me much of the Indians—I suppose he sees little of them at the diggings; and I have been pleasantly astonished by so many things about them. They have banished half my terrors of the Indian country; and when the railroad crosses this country—"

"When it does," returned her host, "you will likely see the same thing up here that you complained of near the railroads across the line—drunkenness, beggary, and filth; nor will you hear hymns to the guardian angels sung by Indian women at nightfall."

"That's what you won't," agreed Mr. Cottrell. "You can't, no matter how you fix it, grow red-skins alongside of steam-whistles and get the worth of your money out o' the investment. They're planned different."

"Well, I'm sure they take kindly to mills for their corn, and modern working implements," protested Miss Raeforth, "and I can't see any harmful effects from them. They are a credit to many a lazy white man who has been bred from numberless generations of improved stock."

"Della!" admonished her uncle. But Mr. Cottrell nodded assent.

"Yes, that's the priests' work," he continued. "They've only been among these reds since the 40's, but something in their religion gets a big hold on them. Why, they keep up their schools, and some o' the bucks—and squaws too—are turned out for missionary work. Yes, and one o' this very tribe," and he nodded toward Simon, "was schooled for a priest. He was a half-breed, and I hear he is raising—well, roping in the back-sliders up in the north. That's where all the outlaws of the tribes break for, you know, and that's where Henri Mercier picked out his work. I've a notion, though, that he just was stuck on the trail and the hunt too much to give them up even for their church, and he managed it to have them both."

"Tell us some more about him," suggested Miss Della. "He is another 'unexpected,' and if we cross his path, I'll be tempted to ask to have my sins forgiven, just to hear him absolve me in the Indian language."

"Oh, he can jabber to you in English or French either," explained their guide. "His father was French—one of the old-timers; died with the tribe he took to. A good man, and a tough one. The boy's the same."

"A tough priest! Well!"

"Men have to be tough, whether they're white or red,

to stand life in the Big Bend winters," he said, and then raised his voice and spoke to Chief Simon, who yet held his place in the stream, and rather pleased at the animated words of the whites, which he supposed were entirely of the mysterious works on the rocks above them; and he looked none the less pleased when Cottrell asked, "*Kah le plet, Henri, alta?*" (where is the priest, Henri, at this time?)

"*Siah—si-ah*" (far away); and he swept his hand to the northwest. "*Siwash klahowyum, hyin, hyin sick. Henri yahwa*" (Indians that are miserable, with many, many sick. He is there).

"Henri is his nephew," explained the other, "and a family is honored among them if it sends anyone as a missionary, or if one is picked out by the priests to train for the church. That's what they did with Mercier's boy, and you can't please old Simon better than to let him hear you ask about Brother Henri."

And even at the sound of the name the vanity of the chief was shown by the complacent glance he turned on them, and then with deft strokes he once more headed the van, and turned his canoe until it breasted the current, speeding as the swans do over the fair mirror between the mountains.

Many more bits of Indian legend were burnished up by their interpreter and recounted for the pleasure of the ladies; but nothing told of the people had quite so much interest for Miss Della as had the story of the Indian boy who had promised to be a mighty hunter by his many exploits, but who had turned from the trap and the trail to don the black robe of the church, and her interest was in nowise abated when she learned he was yet young.

"Take care," admonished Mrs. Ewing. "You seem likely to fall in love with this new hero before you see him. Just remember a few of the half-breeds you have seen, and take warning."

"Don't be horrid! If I want to dream romantic things among these romantic surroundings, do let me have a chance. It is the first time in my life that I've ever been allowed a breath outside of the commonplace world, and even this Uncle would spoil, if he could, by talking of pay-dirt in the gulches, and all sorts of prosaic things."

But her uncle only looked at her fondly and a little teasingly.

"To hear her you would imagine her one of the people who thought pay-dirt and the ills of wealth most objectionable things," he said, turning to Mrs. Ewing; "but she has really a very good idea of business, and I always suspect her of hiding stock reports between the leaves of the novels she pretends to read."

He was a rather quiet man, this Mr. Raeforth, whose eyes twinkled very kindly from under gray brows, but whose smoothly-shaven lips did not seem given to either laughter or jest—cool, firm lips, suiting well the idea of suppressed knowledge that his silence conveyed. And while he saw that his niece had all things conducive to her comfort and fancy, it was done with so little of demonstration that a stranger could not have guessed which of the two attractive young ladies was his own special charge.

"Is it any wonder," complained his niece, "that I rush into numberless romances to spice life with? Uncle is a charming companion, if one can talk figures with him, but, as figures are facts, I have to get relaxation by educating my fancy on all available material, and I am simply reveling in the scope one has here. Why, we have not passed even a mile since we left Little Dalles that we have not heard or seen something unusual, and several of the unusual things have been charming. And then, see the collection I have made!"

The "collection" was the fruit of a tiny box, with nothing

distinguishing but a clicking sound that escaped from it now and then, if something especially desirable came within range of Miss Raeforth's vision; for what place so isolated but that the modern tourist can convey the photographer's outfit for amateurs into it.

Chief Simon was several times depicted in the little squares that were to be developed into things of beauty—the circle of canoes about the pictured rocks—the scenes about the lodges of the Colvilles—the squaws carrying water, with the white sheen of the river back of them, and the young grass about their feet—anything and everything of the new life that appeared to her fascinating—and was surely not unpleasant when viewed from the luxury of that young lady's personal surroundings.

"Don't you feel just a little like an Indian Cleopatra on your way to subdue some warrior of the north?" she asked, after pleased contemplation of the young wife's face; "for you really look quite royal against the silver-gray of those robes."

But Mrs. Ewing only laughed happily. "Your romancing must always have such grand characters," she objected. "Can't you find a few nearer commonplace content? For I've an idea that Cleopatra never had so much happiness in all her gorgeous life as you are trying to help me to, and I'm quite sure she never won better friends on so lucky a chance."

"Never mind, we'll make Antony pay tribute," threatened the girl. "I know I shall depend on him to find us a big tree to camp in, since they tell us there is not a hotel at the place. And if the rest of this country and inhabitants are as pleasant as the portion we have seen, I may conclude to live in the tree until you get through your inspection trip. What would you say, Uncle?"

"Better wait and see what Neil says," he suggested;

"and he will likely have some prose, instead of poetry, to read you about High-Low as an abode for ladies."

"Well, I'm sure Mrs. Ewing is to abide there—for awhile, at least."

"Else you should not," added her guardian. "Little women who like pioneering should provide themselves with just the sort of body-guard that is to be surprised by her arrival."

"Give me time, can't you? My intention is to provide myself with just such a safeguard, as soon as I can find someone to say 'yes' without attaching too many conditions to the bargain. That boy of Mercier's, now, he sounds nice and promising. But that selfish black robe! Ah, well, it only adds one more to the tragedies of 'might have beens.'"

But the others showed little of belief in her mockery. Mr. Cottrell gazed at her rather critically, as if with the endeavor to locate her in any class of ladies he had ever known; but the others, recognizing the frivolity, betook themselves to their own dreams, and she was left to her enjoyment of realities.

And among them was the dinner, partaken of a little way up from the pebbled shore, one that was a repetition of their breakfast in bill-of-fare; and, as little time was given to its consumption, Mr. Raeforth had but a limited space of time to give the Big Bend region at that season, and the fairest beauties of the land and water were pushed past hurriedly.

Even their camps for the night were left for late seeking by their guides, who rowed as easily by the light of stars, or the moon, so near full, as by the June sun that took the chill from the water.

And so it was that they were still moving as they passed through the narrows, where the upper lake empties with a

great rush into the lower water. The ascent was slow and perilous, but the desire to camp on the upper lake pushed them on through the sunset and twilight, not willing to halt midway in the narrow and reckless channel. But, dark as it was growing, a sudden "Ki!" from Simon aroused his white friends to the fact that others than themselves were on the rushing water, and then, from the shadows above, a canoe darted downward on the current; and Miss Raeforth could have touched with her hand a white stranger, reclining in the boat that met them and vanished again quickly. The dark boatman called greetings to some of the Indians as he passed. But his passenger might have been a ghost for all notice he took of them—in fact, as he was facing aft, he did not see them until the boats had passed each other, and even then he did not speak; but the questioning gaze of Miss Raeforth did receive a token from a raised hat, and eyes that met hers in swift exchange of amazement, and then his boat darted downward, leaving with her the impression of a fair, aristocratic face, old enough to look tired, and young enough to look attractive—altogether, so vivid a contrast to the "good Indian" or the bad "squaw man" of the north country that the speculative young lady asked many a question of his identity. But that he was probably some stray from the mines was the only suggestion their guide could give—an idea rather pleasant to the feminine ears.

"For where there is one of that rather pleasing personality, there is likely to be more," reasoned the youngest schemer, "and the place less likely to be the howling wilderness they try to make us believe. Only I can't help wishing that such as this handsome unknown would await our coming, instead of flying as soon as we take the trail there."

CHAPTER VI.

REDNEY'S VISITOR.

LONG after the moon had risen, by whose light Milt was covering the rough trail down the river to the canoes, Milt's chum was yet in the midst of renovations and maledictions, and about him was chaos.

"If I only had time to knock together another shack to stow things in, or to stow that Miss Fresh in. She's like to locate here, an' turn up her nose at everything we've got. I'll bet her nose turns up, anyway," and his hand went up to that straight, well-formed feature of his own face with a good deal of complacency. "Yes, sir, I'll bet she's a little snipe with a turn-up nose that can't raise her hands to help herself with—one o' the squally, scarey sort that I seen down by Victoria. Name just sounds that way—Della! oh, *Della!*" and the words were emphasized by the broom with which he whisked a pile of chips and dust into the fire-place. "Darned if I sweep any when she comes. Miss Dell—rhymes with—"

And then Redney whistled the rhyme to his own satisfaction, rather elated to find a mild way of "cussing" at the unwelcome guest whom he was confident would upset the routine of their lives.

Mrs. Nannie was different. Nannie and that baby were wanted, and in their two-room cabin the owners felt there was just room enough for one little woman, a cradle (Redney had already manufactured that article of furniture), and themselves. But a fifth member was a superfluity to the establishment, and the housekeeper got what revenge he

could by making up his mind that she was ugly and calling her Miss Fresh.

But growling at an object so far away is unsatisfactory work, and Redney desisted to rest and nurse the new pups which he was treasuring up as an offering to the baby. For six months he and Ewing had been together, meeting by chance along the line of the States, and throwing their luck and work together to develop the claim Redney had staked out the summer before, up in the Selkirks.

Wealth had not yet come, though friendship had, and hope, and many a plan for the future, and through them all sounded the name of Nannie, Nannie, on the boy's ears; and this was the last bachelor night for the cabin, to-morrow the queen would rule.

He was telling the pups so, and watching the fire fall lower and lower on the hearth. It was really time to hunt his blankets, and he was just telling himself so, when a sound from without sent the sleepiness from him; yet it was a very slight sound, that of a careful step. It was the slow carefulness that interested him. The pups were tumbled, blind and grunting, into their nest under his bunk. The cabin was darker than the moonlight without, and, slipping to the window, he drew back with a quick exclamation, as another face appeared there, and for a second the two pairs of eyes peered at each other questioningly. Then the young fellow walked to the door.

"Why don't you come in?" he demanded; "what are you scared of, anyway?"

And she came in, silent as a shadow, and dropped down on the hearth, holding out her hands to the few embers, a shivering, deprecating form—squaw Élouise.

"I saw him go—gallop, gallop—the man you like," she said. "It was beyond the bend, but I come—you were good to me—you—oh—"

She was tremulous as well as shivering, and Redney threw some bark on the fire, looking at her closely in the blaze of light, and drawing her closer to the warmth.

"*Cole sick?*" (ague or chills), he demanded, seeing the face that had grown older, paler, in some way, not a vestige left of the red devil in her eyes, but tired, so tired!

She shook her head, but he saw that her lips as well as the hands were tremulous now, and he accordingly put a little more of brusqueness into his next query.

"Hungry?"

She did not speak even then, only looked up at him; and he who had growled all the evening over an additional boarder to be fed, *i. e.*, Miss Della, now hustled some eatables out of the provision-box with an alacrity that suggested willingness. And the girl took them; she seemed half-starved, by the eagerness with which she ate, though one-half the contents of the plate was pushed aside ere she began, and was left untouched when she finished.

"How so?" he asked in Chinook, and pointed to the plate. "Plenty here; eat it."

But she shook her head.

"Élouise will take it when she goes," she answered; "not now, but pretty soon; rest now a little while."

He handed her a cup of coffee, which she drank and seemed refreshed by. "So good," she said, in the soft tones of the northern Indian that would make the voice of the average American sound like a peacock's in comparison, "so good!"

Redney only grunted at the compliment to the coffee, and rolled up a blanket for her to use as a pillow.

"Rest, then," he said, curtly, as if to temper so much consideration with some sort of alloy; "sleep."

"No," she answered, but lay there with closed eyes quite awhile, and then her host, glancing at her, saw that they were no longer closed, but were watching him.

"What did you do to him?" he asked then, and laughed silently when she signed non-comprehension. "Don't lie," he advised. "Some folks told me you were a church Indian, and the priests tell them not to lie, so I'll be priest and you can confess your sins," he grinned. "What did you do with him?"

She looked at him a long while, and then she said:

"Put him in the mountain."

"Planted him!" said the boy, *sotto voce*, and grinning no longer. He was looking in wonder at the slight girlish form, and the face, wan and refined in the glimmering light, and the slender hands that looked passive and weak just now, and remembering Dunbar's physique, he realized what strength it would take to "plant" such a specimen of mankind.

"Yourself—your *lone* self?"

She nodded. "He walk all, all the way, and not know. A cover I made for him. He is there, so still now; but no bread, no meat to put before him, so I come to you."

Redney's respect for her increased with his horror, for it was a bit horrible to hear so young a thing speak with so much calmness of a man she had killed.

"I said you had pluck that night, didn't I? and you've got it, dead loads of it. But you've got to lay low; *kumtucks*?"

She nodded that she understood.

"They'll be after you like hounds," he went on; and then remembering the strangers who were to come—"whew! won't they, now! You struck the right trail when you dropped in here to-night. I'll help you; yes, sir. You just lay low for awhile and I'll find some trail for you to get through on down the country. Pity you're a girl," and he glanced at her disapprovingly; "still, you've got sand, and that counts. But you don't need grub to give him, now he's done for."

"May be so, may be not," and tears rose to her eyes and fell one by one unchecked on the stone hearth. Redney was perplexed. This was not "sand." What ailed her?

"Oh, let up on the melancholy, can't you? If stackin' grub around them is part o' your religious pow-wows, stack away. I'll give you some, only don't weaken like that. You're played out, though, an' half-starved, I reckon. Where have you been eating since the night—well, when I saw you?"

"On the mountain—berries, roots, fish."

"Ever since?"

"Always; I hid from all people."

"Even the princess?"

She nodded. "See her no more, never! Élouise is alone."

"No friends nowhere?"

"One, far, far now, may be; the "Father" now, Priest Henri. But I no go to him."

"Kerrect! Them priests think as much of a tenderfoot as they do of a man. Well, you are in a box, and a girl, too. You've got as little to anchor to as I have."

"You no friends, no family?" she asked, pityingly.

"Naw, don't want any. Got Milt, he's plenty; got a daddy somewhere down in the States. Don't take stock in him, though. He shook me when I was a pappoose; left me at a shebang for a board bill and never showed up again. I was about four years old, they allowed there, and I've been my own man ever since."

"And they call you Red?"

"Yes; that's 'cause he let out—my daddy, you know—that my mother had Indian blood in her; more likely nigger by my hair," and he shook the long tresses forward, showing the wavy tendency in their blackness. "He'd lived among the tribes a heap, though. Went back an' got another

squaw after he left me, so I heard once. I used to think I'd shoot him on sight; but pshaw, what's the odds! Tramps like him leave brats all over the range an' forget all about them. Your daddy was a white man, too, wasn't he? You're too bleached to be even a half-breed."

"La Mestina is half; my father was white—white, with curly hair, and laughed always. 'Jolly,' the white hunters called him.

"That's the sort," remarked Redney, seriously. "I've seen them. They do the laughing an' leave someone else to do the crying. Don't reckon the princess did much o that, though."

"Yes," contradicted the girl; "much. I was half so old as now, I remember. Then she turned against all the church, and the chief, and for long time we took the trail; go—go, looking for him, in where men drank. Then she drank, much, much, but never see him. Then the tribe cut her off, though she was La Mestina. She never go back, she never find the Ha—Ha—Harte."

The boy looked at her with startled eyes for a moment, and then asked:

"Harte? Was *your* daddy's name Harte?"

"It is so. Rubee, she called him, but the men said Harte. Just how white he was I remember, and how curly his hair."

"Yes."

Redney's hand went mechanically up to his own hair, that waved and curled when the air was moist. He asked no more questions, but looked with a new interest at the girl who rested there, and whose hair was not curly. Though fair in face, she had the hair and features of Indian ancestry.

"But I talk so much, I stay so long," she said, rising on her elbow. "The trail is long, and—"

She staggered a little as she arose, and Redney, with an air of proprietorship, caught her arm.

"Easy there! Sit down. You can't take a trail when you're that shaky. You just locate in the cabin for to-night."

"No, oh, no!" and she stood upright again. "He is there all alone. I come. I can starve a little, but he—he is not used to that; so I come. I will work—fish—anything."

"We'll look after the work another day," said the young fellow; and, turning away, he made up a bundle of stuff for her, adding a small flask of whisky, as he thought of the trembling, exhausted figure she had made on entrance. She was steadier now; the bit of supper had been of help. But, looking at her, he decided that her brain was a bit "touched." That was why she persisted so that the dead man must not be left without something to eat. Well, it was enough to upset any woman, he supposed, and she was not even that, only a girl; and against her the justice of the law that asks a life for a life.

Redney had not nearly so much respect for the law as he had for "sand." An overhauling of his moral code would have suggested the need of a missionary. But just then he knew she needed help, and who but he to ask for it?

"It's a queer go, though, her coming to me, *me* being the one to look after her. Well, darned if I'm ashamed of her, anyway." Then to her he said: "Will you tell me where you camp?"

She hesitated.

"Don't, if you don't feel like it," he added quickly. "But you'd better tell me some place where I can meet you, or leave signs for you; then I'll want to go for fish, too."

"How did you see I took him?" she asked suddenly, ignoring his speech, though looking at him.

"Moccasin-tracks—little," and he pointed to her feet encased in skin shoes, "on tip-toe under the window. I rubbed them out."

"Yes, through the window—like here—I looked. Then he talked, talked, but the other man never hear. I hear. Then by an' by he gets up, walks over other man through the door. I just whisper, only whisper, an' take his hand, an' he never turned back. He come right up into the mountain. I only whisper—whisper!"

"So that was the 'how,' was it? Well, that's done for; and now, where can I locate you?"

"You know the *Stegwaah lamonti* (Thunder mountain), and the *tumwata?* (cascade)—there—at the foot, every day when the moccasin can cover the shadow—so, Élouise will be. You come?"

"Certain. I'll go past the settlement with you this trip, too, I reckon. I've my doubts about you keeping up for the trail. I'll carry that plunder. Ready?"

"You are good," she said once as she walked beside him. "The same that night at Antoine's, I saw."

"Didn't allow you saw anything but that guzzling yahoo that won you," remarked Redney, sourly, remembering his ill thoughts of the night, and the girl's eyes with the adoration in them. But he said nothing further; he did not question, in the slightest, her deed or her impulse. People learn not to ask questions in outlawed communities, and Redney had never lived in any other. The wonder was that so much of boyishness remained with him through all the rough life he had struggled in. Milt could only explain it to himself by the fact that whisky had no charm for him. He had no conscientious scruples about the free use of "lum," only he did not seem to take to it himself; consequently, if there were any sober men in the gangs, he was usually with them, and usually liked, and

still nick-named "the kid," though he must have been twenty, at least.

The pair of them circled the settlement like stealthy ghosts. Scarce a whisper was exchanged between them, though Redney noted that she covered the trail quickly and kept on her feet better than he had thought for.

"You'll do. You're a *shookum* (brave or strong) squaw, even if you ain't grown up yet," he said, as she halted and reached for the little bundle, signifying that she would go on alone.

They were over a mile from the camp and were along the river, though he fancied she kept to it for a blind.

"I'll go on to the cascade, if you say so; it's only about a mile."

"No; you go home, rest," she said, halting to rest herself ere taking the pathless way to her hiding-place. "You want sleep."

"I reckon—say, Élouise, did you ever know any white women?"

She drew back a step and looked at him. "Down there," with a contemptuous fling of her hand toward the settlement—"them I see—the Dutch Liz—the—"

"Ugh! no, they ain't what I mean, he interrupted; 'they're tough. I mean *women*—the sort square men marry; Milt, my partner, has married one. She'll be here to-morrow—and the kid. Lord! if you hadn't been so—so onlucky, she'd likely done you a heap o' good. Women folks is what you ought to know."

"*Nah!*—don't like them—none," said the girl, decidedly. "I know—I hear the hunters talk—no good."

"You're right about most of them," agreed Redney, as if from the summit of mature experience, "but some are different. There's one to come to-morrow that'll be a show to see in her town 'get up.' I don't allow she's much account, but she's white."

"You know the woman?"

"Naw—and I don't want to! She's a little snipe with a turned-up nose, I hear" (*hear!* oh, Redney!)—"and I'll likely have to camp out while she stays; and they call her Dell—*Della*."

There was some vicious satisfaction to be got out of the contemptuous repetition of the name he thought babyish, and he got it all.

"Dell?" and the girl turned to him quickly—"Dell—that is what he—he—Neil called me when I led him away. 'Dell,' he said—'little Dell.'"

"Oh, pshaw!" and he tried to laugh and failed, facing her wide, questioning eyes, and remembering, with a bit of a shock, that the Indian *Elouise* and the Caucasian *Della* had one bit of interest in common—that man; then an inspiration led him into an adroit lie.

"Why, it was the mines he meant—not a woman. Little Dell mine, you know; that's where he's been for months. I allow he thought he was on the trail there."

"Oh!" she breathed, with a little air of relief. "Now *klahowya*" (good-by).

She was about to leave him, when suddenly bits of noise came to them through the silence, and without a word they shrunk together in the shadow, waiting.

Then each relaxed a little the tension of nerves as the sound of paddles and horses' feet told them it was no pursuing party, and it was meeting instead of following. A pleasant party, for as they came closer a woman's clear laughter came to them on the night—laughter—and canoes showing in the moonlight. One was close in-shore, and beside it rode Redney's partner.

"Hello! it's Milt," gasped Redney in amazement—"Milt and the whole outfit. Well I'll be ——!"

In his excitement he leaned forward more than he

intended, his foot slipped, and the horseman wheeled with drawn revolver as a dark form pitched forward in the moonlight, making a crackling in the brush above the narrow strip of beach.

"Hold up, there!" came gaspingly from the shadows. "I'm no grizzly."

"Redney! Well, what in the mischief are you doing out here?"

"Come for a walk," answered the youth, righting himself, and glad Élouise had more sense than himself and was yet hidden above them, "and to meet you."

"Meet me?" and Milt's tones had nothing of doubt but all of amazement in them. "And what blessed Indian jugglery told you I had met the canoes coming up?"

Redney smiled—a smile suggesting all that was mysterious. He was quite ready to be thought possessed of any occult power just then if it would settle queries and get the party on a move, lest that girl above there on the bank might make some misstep or movement that would betray her.

"Oh, I felt it in my bones;" and then, lower, as the canoe moved a little ahead, "How's he?"

"Great! Nannie—Mrs. Ewing will show him to you. Go closer."

He took a few steps with the intention of seeing the storied "he," for in the moonlight he could see a lady holding in her arms a restless, squirming bundle—a lady who leaned forward smilingly at her husband's words; and then, right across her, he saw another face, one that stopped him—a pretty, tired face, with a childish mouth, and eyes that were gazing very intently, even in a startled way, right over his head and up at the bank from which he had tumbled.

"Oh, I guess he'll keep till he reaches the shack," he

muttered, backing out. "You folks ride on, Milt; I'll take the nigh trail."

And without another word he broke into the brush and left them. In the sudden meeting he had forgotten the interloper—Della; the instinctively detested one—Miss Fresh. She had deigned to drop her eyes to him for one brief instant, but the gaze had a quizzical quality that made him hate her.

He had met the enemy, and retired—routed.

CHAPTER VII.

FAMILY FOLKS IN HIGH-LOW.

THE social atmosphere of High-Low was shaken next morning by something cyclonic. Three things had struck the camp in the night, three things not as yet recorded in its annals—a capitalist from the States, ladyhood twice represented, and babyhood once; but though the smallest in bulk, his drawing powers as an attraction were stupendous; even the dainty girl who held him as often as his mother gained not nearly so much notice, though occasionally some of the visitors from the near camps did look enviously at the unconscious son and heir of the Ewing establishment.

But they said little. The prospectors were mostly French-Canadians or half-breeds, and these new-comers were foreigners in a way—from down across that invisible line that shuts "Americans" on the other side, where some of them would just as soon have had the Americans stay. Vast as the unexplored territory was there, a dog-in-the-manger

attitude was often held by the natives toward the comers from other climes; especially those from across that southern line, who laughed at them often, and talked of "annexing" them, much as one would suggest a guardian for incapable children—thereby starting many a small war that launched its participants from this vale of fighting shadows into the "Golden Presently."

Dunbar had been one exception to the minds of these quick-tempered northerners. He had laughed none at their squaw men. The social system of the Canadian frontier was a thing to commend for aught any of the sensitive ones ever heard him hint to the contrary. Ah! he was the man for them—he—Gentleman Neil!

But their pleasant one was no more, so they told Capital, as represented by Mr. J. B. Raeforth, so they told Beauty, as represented by Miss Della Raeforth.

In fact, as the days wore on, it was astonishing how much they found to tell her of their opinions on the question. Coming up in wonderfully conceived attempts at full dress, and sitting sheepishly around, would say, "I may be take the trail along the water to-morrow, may be bring you news;" or, "Mees, we go—me, my brother—up where the snow is for the mountain goat. It may happen we find your relation."

And so, instead of a flying trip up into the wilds, the girl from the East stayed on and on, listening to strange tales of strange disappearances of men in the mountains, and long after, when they were about forgotten, some had been known to walk back into camp like revived Van Winkles, having only "cut loose" for a change.

"He is not found dead—he may yet be living," Nannie assured her, and Milt assured her; and Redney, crowded out of the house into a hammock under a shed, grinned at his own fancies, but offered no opinion, notwithstanding the

fact that Miss Della had a fashion of gazing at him in an inquiring way if the subject were under discussion.

"That young Indian, or whatever he is, always impresses me as having more knowledge of poor Neil than he will tell," she confided to Nannie. But Nannie's negative was emphatic.

"Indeed no. Milt says he is a splendid fellow, and devoted to a friend, though he is a little shy with ladies. Poor boy never knew any before. But he knows no more of Mr. Dunbar than Milt does. There was so little to know—that is—you see—"

And then Nannie turned her attention to the dinner that was in preparation.

The winning and losing of the princess apparent was as yet a thing unknown to the girl. "Poor Neil" had been suffering from brain fever, and in delirium had strayed away, that was the story which was skimmed over for her benefit.

"It's noways polite, anyhow, to meet ladies the minute they strike the camp with a hullabaloo about carousin' an' cuttin'," was the decision of the gentleman who had been Dunbar's nurse; "an' watch your words, anyway, when you're a speakin' o' the dead."

But Milt had told Nannie, and that little lady was properly shocked, and at once took on so tender and pitying a manner to Della that Mr. Raeforth, after his quick, business-like view of the mine up the country and some prospects nearer High-Low, had to take his departure without her.

"All right," he agreed, amiably; "thought you wanted to make the coast trip, though, to the Mexico diggings. But if you're bent on staying with Mrs. Ewing, make out a list of what you need to be comfortable and I'll send it from that outfitting place. If Neil turns up, write, and if he

don't, don't you worry yourself thin by the time I get back for you."

And as she was an obedient child, she lost neither color nor flesh, only noted with those childish, open eyes of hers all the wild life about, and caught sly mischievous impressions of people and things with the aid of the amateur photographer's outfit, a thing that Redney eyed afar off and by no sort of persuasion could be induced to get in range of. In fact, his presence about the house was a scarce article. He had suggested boarding by himself up nearer their work, but his partner's wife had protested.

"Am I such a *very* bad cook, then?" she asked; "and how am I to manage the table and 'the boy' at the same time. Miss Della declares he watches for you every morning."

"Oh! she does, does she?"

"And she says, too," continued the little lady disapprovingly, "that you don't like her. Now why is that, Mr. Redney? She is such a nice lady."

"Um! hum!" assented Redney, without opening his mouth; and then, "I reckon there ain't much of love lost, nohow."

"Why, Redney, she likes you; indeed, yes. She has so many pictures already of you, and says *what* a good face you have to photograph, and—"

"Huh!"

Redney stood up suddenly, and really looked very tall to Nannie, who was not at all so, and his black eyes made her remember that, after all, he was part Indian, and if he should be angry—

"Oh! it was for fun only," she tried to explain; "not for offense at all, only—"

But Redney was gone. It was morning, not nearly the time for the moccasin to cover the shadow—*i. e.*, midday.

Yet he struck back from the path to High-Low or other thoroughfares where men walk or work. He turned in the direction where he had gone daily of late—for fish. And Nannie watched him go with misgivings. Had she driven away her husband's best friend? And why in the world need he glare like that at her?

"He is really only a young savage, after all," she told Miss Raeforth later. "I suppose he has a lot of superstitions against picture-taking. But I do wonder where he has flown to?"

"Gone to see his girl," suggested the other.

"Girl? Why, he has no girl."

"Hasn't he? Well, then, I saw him once when he had borrowed some other fellow's girl for a moonlight tryst."

"Nonsense! *Redney?*"

"Redney it was," laughed the girl, "and I'll not tell you another word. Do you suppose that young gentleman will go through life without winning some sweetheart with that handsome face?"

"But there are no—no reputable girls here for the boy to know."

"Then I'm much afraid your 'boy' is disreputable, and I'm afraid also that you forget that the 'boy' is older than you are, Mrs. Nineteen, at least he looks so. And why should he not have a girl?"

Was it, then, a girl that drew his feet away into the wildness of the woods? There he went, anyway, going as the bees go, straight to the place of the *tumwata*, climbing the steepness of the northern shelf. But once there, in the shadow where the water sweeps by in swift whiteness, he dropped down and watched it, muttering, as was his fashion, his face flushing warmly, perhaps angrily, at Mrs. Nannie's revelations.

And there Élouise came to him—came down from above,

in her hands a string of *tzum salmon* (speckled trout) and some nooses of the white inner bark of the hickory, her only net.

"Sick?" she asked, quickly; and was scarcely assured when he grunted a negative.

"*Till?*" (tired).

"Not much. Just crowded out o' the blankets. Let me be, can't you?"

Which she did until the silence grew unbearable, and he was glad to break it himself.

"Look here, Louise, when are you ready to hit the trail down there?" and he pointed to the south. "I'm about ready to cut loose—too many people loafing into High-Low; an' you better follow suit."

"No," she said, with a little troubled look at his statement. "No, he owns me; he can't go yet; I must stay."

"Oh, say, look here," he said, impatiently. "When the man's dead he can't own you. You can't follow him to hell, even if you want to, and darned if I don't believe that's what you *would* like! Just like a fool woman!"

Her eyes filled with tears, as they had that other time when he had spoken of Dunbar's death.

"No, not yet," she said, simply.

"S'pose—look here, now—s'pose you had a—say a brother, that would get you out o' this country and make a livin' for you, same as white folks have?"

"I have no brother; and even then—"

"You wouldn't shake that blamed carcass you've got stowed away somewhere!" he burst out, wrathfully.

"That's like a woman, too, I s'pose."

"And you don't like them women?"

'*Like* them! Well, I—no, I don't," he ended, doggedly.

"Not the pretty white squaw, even? Ah, you should like the pretty ones."

"Ugh! she ain't pretty; it's only the clothes and things she wears. I hain't said she was pretty."

"No; but you talk of her much," said the girl, dreamily. "When people talk of each other long, they must think. When they think much, there is no hate, not much hate; so I think."

"Well, think again," he growled, with a very red face; "and while you're at it, just think when you'll take the trail out o' this hole in the hill, or wherever you camp."

"May be not at all. Do not be angry, not you, *nika tillikum* (my friend). Some day you will see why. I am his; that is all."

"But *he* don't want you now," he blurted out, brutally.

"May be not; may be some day," was the sad, patient reply; and Redney arose.

"Women folks at High-Low are bad enough; you're worse," he said, tersely. "Give me the fish."

"There are also the skins, six of the marten."

"All right; what do you want for them?"

"Tea, some, little; *sapolil* (flour), little. Can you?"

"Oh, I'll get it," he said, confidently, "though my pard did get curious over that salt I toted from Antoine's."

"Do they ask of him—of me?"

"No; not of any account."

He had told her not a word of Neil's anxious friends. He had made up his mind that Élouise was a bit crazy over the question of being owned by Dunbar, but how could he prove that mental state to others? In no way he could see. All he could do was to keep her hidden until some chance of her own inclination led her to leave with him. For if she was ever found with that dead body—!

Redney stopped, and shivered when he thought of what would happen.

"Listen," she said, as he turned away; "they must not

track you. S'pose you come only every six days? I am strong now. I can hunt. Only *sapolil* must I need. The fish I will leave on the little stream every morning.

"But they may see you."

"Not Élouise—not when alone."

And with that final arrangement he turned his feet toward the camp again—he, Redney, who had never gone near women, and was now decidedly beset by the annoyances two of the creatures were daily launching at him.

CHAPTER VIII.

IKT ELITE (ONE SLAVE).

And Élouise? Guileless trust was surely not one of her traits, despite Redney's kindness, for like a slim snake she crept after him, just keeping far enough away to avoid him if he turned, and watching carefully to see that he did not turn. Satisfied at last, she retraced her steps, and leaving their place of meeting, walked carefully, very carefully, toward the source of the stream. Not once did those little moccasins by which Redney had tracked her first touch soil if stones were in her way. Not a track was left in the wet sands; no such haste moved her as that night by Neil's window. Not a tuft of grass with its gleams of gold at the roots was trampled as she went over the trail that looked as if never disturbed by human feet. And so still—so still! only the whimper and murmur of the water turned loose by the mountain, only the muffled sound of pheasants' thunder beating against the silence, a sound

that accents isolation. Shy birds fluttered up into the sunshine from their ground-nests and slipped back again to their young when the feet had passed, and the young human thing, needing motherhood as much as the birds in nests, went on and upward thinking not any of that.

Why should she? Motherhood, like womanhood, was a thing to be avoided by her. All she had known of them was evil. Men were better, so she thought.

None would, without a clew, have ever thought of searching for her where she went. If all High-Low had turned out with blood-hounds, they would have halted before they reached the end of her trail; for where the stream dwindled to a narrow bit, creeping under low brush and thick with tangled vines, the moccasins were loosened, and carrying them, she bent low and walked in the water through the long, leafy tunnel—not nearly so easy a thing to do as to tell of, for dam-like weaving of dead limbs crossed her way often, the wash of many a midsummer torrent July sends down from the snow-peaks, and over them and through them she crept, breaking never one by which she would be traced.

And emerging from it, she reached a bare place where stones lay loose and warm in the sun, and on them she stepped to drive away the chill of her feet from that walk through the shadows. Many a one would have halted there, if but for the sake of the view that spread so far below—mountain past mountain, across which white clouds drifted as they were drawn up from the valleys at the kiss of the sun; and above the clouds so many a white crown towered, so many a snowy shoulder bathed in the rose-light, for the day was yet young, the dusk of dawn scarce driven from the shadowy clefts away below.

The girl did turn for one satisfied glance over it all as she arose from adjusting the moccasins; it was so much her own—all that beauty which seemed to uphold the sky.

No other than herself had to creep like this to their deep wilderness, asking of its waters the fish, of its jungles the game. Other women had kindred; other girls had homes. She had only her bonds to the master that Redney had disliked so. Did the wild things know all of her bitter need that so many of their kind came slipping into her nets and nooses? In her gratitude, she asked those questions; sometimes she asked so many unanswerable ones there in her loneliness and uncertainty. Perhaps it was some longing for those unanswered things which had given her eyes of late so serious a wistfulness, the look in them that had puzzled Redney so the night in the cabin. He finally concluded it was the grip of remorse that was having a steady hold of her up on the peaks there, and which had turned her brain just enough to make her a queer one.

A queer one! And the boy knew no more than herself that she was a thing beautiful, with wild, uncommon grace. He had known so long these fairest Indians of the north, with their fineness of feature, their forms of symmetry, and their voices of velvet, but that any of his interest had first been won for this one because of exceptionable beauty did not once occur to him. He growled a good deal at her, but in spite of that he was influenced much by her wishes, and looked at her much in sudden discoveries that she was not quite like any other *tenas kloocheman* (little squaw, *i. e.*, girl) whom he had ever seen. But that she was more beautiful, he never told himself; nor would he at sight of snowy fleets of the graceful swan that breasted Arrow Lake, or at the dainty dignity of the wood-dove, or the pride, yet the softness, in the eyes of the young deer. He liked to see these wild creatures. A sense of completeness was with him as he gazed, but he could scarcely have told why. Looking at Élouise, he had much of the same feeling—she was only a sister to those others.

And to her nest she crept quite as stealthily. Not a dainty-looking nest, either; so high up the steeps, with an entrance frowning out at the world through its great overhanging shelf of rock that reached out portico-like above a porch so covered with vines and small growths that one could have walked above and around with never a guess that below there was a dwelling-house, while from under a stone near the entrance bubbled out the tiny rill that was really the source of the Tumwata Creek away below.

In it she laid the fish on their wand of light, flexible wood, fastening it by a stone in the shadiest place; and for an instant she stood just inside the cave entrance, her head bent in toward the shadows, listening, listening. Then a tender, satisfied smile touched her lips, her eyes softening as when something well-beloved crosses the vision; yet her glance met only the stone portal. She was seeing through some other sense than the visual.

The ashes were drawn from over live coals close to the wall, where the smoke-black was hidden by the shadow; and above it, far up, a bit of zigzag daylight crept, making a better chimney than the dwellers in tepees know. On the coals she dropped bits of dry bark until the blaze arose, and over it twigs and broken sticks, which vanish in hot ashes so quickly. And in the hot ashes what delicious things can be baked; and over the red coals how crisply the trout browns.

But the young squaw had other work in conjunction with the breakfast. Some white, fibrous roots, strangely aromatic, were mashed and beaten on a flat stone until they were mere creamy pulp. On a leaf similar to the plantain, a leaf already wilted in the sun and cooled in the shadow, she spread the preparation, covering it deftly with another of the green coats, and arose, looking with a bit of serious scrutiny to find a flaw in the enveloped preparation, and noting none, passed into the shadows.

But they lasted such a little way, just around a jutting bit of rock that reached like a pillar from floor to roof; and through the wall near it an opening up near the top let in light from the south that streamed across the white, sandy floor and flashed on glistening atoms of crystals in the rear wall.

It lightened also the niche made by the natural partition, and rested on the man's face who lay on the low bed there. The girl knelt beside him, with an inexplicable look in the black eyes, an odd, un-Indian-like tremble of the red mouth that scarcely prisoned a quick sigh.

And either the mesmerism of her gaze or else that broken breath aroused him, for with a grimace of pain he moved restlessly and opened his eyes—eyes dazed and questioning as he met those of the girl, who no longer knelt beside him, for at his first movement she arose and stood erect, impassive, by his couch.

"It is the time to cool your shoulder," she said, quietly, "so I have come."

"Yes, I suppose so," he assented. "You did it before—yesterday? I saw you, I know, and you would not let me talk. When was that?"

"That was yesterday," she nodded. "Sleep is better than talk; it makes you strong again."

He watched her face dreamily as she bent above him, removing the blackened leaves from his shoulder and placing the cool, moist ones in their stead, and feeling an exquisite sense of ease follow the touch of her fingers.

"Wish you'd sit down and say something," he said, and smiled at her persuasively. "I've got all sorts of queer ideas of you tangled up in my head. Seems as if I've seen you bending over me for ages and ages—in a dozen different lives; always bending over, never sitting down or talking; and I wish you'd scatter some of these crazy fancies by seating yourself just once and saying something."

"There is nothing to say," she answered, seating herself obediently, "only you have been sick—head sick, shoulder sick; both held the fever. Now it is gone you must have things to eat; the things are on the fire, and the fire will die if I sit long."

"Oh, go along, then!" and the blue eyes with the great shadows about them almost laughed at her passivity. "Only if you had been living with ghosts through a fever, or whatever it was, you'd appreciate having something of flesh and blood to look at for a change."

She made no answer, only obeyed his first words and went out, while he craned his neck ineffectually to see where the door was.

"I've an idea that I've been through it dozens of times, too," he thought, and gazed about the walls that looked familiar, though he could state no time when he had of a certainty seen them before. There was a puzzling sense of unreality in it all, but any quick movement dispelled any shade of unreality from his shoulder; the wound there was a certainty. "And the most puzzling part of it is that I have so little remembrance of how I came to get it—thanks for that to Antoine's rum. I must have been beastly;" and pale as his face was, it grew warm at his vague reminiscences.

He remembered buying that ticket thirteen; he remembered wondering what in the world he would do with his prize when won, at the same time that he decided she would have to be put in a home somewhere; he remembered that, but that was not the portion of the night at which he blushed to remember; there was Cleve's face and the money—the last dollar; and then—

He supposed it was because Élouise had refused to go with her winner that Cleve had turned on him in a rage. He supposed Cleve was drunk too, else he never would

have broke loose like that. He remembered the flash of a knife, the cut, down where that hurt was, so deep, and then he had either fainted or sobered up, for he had no remembrance of anything after he seized Clevents until on that cot in Collins' cabin.

Collins had thought his patient still delirious when, after a long stare from the cot, he had quietly asked, "Did I kill Cleve?"

The gambler's face was the last he remembered. It had drifted into his sick fancies as an accompaniment of that wound, and the direction of his fancies was proven by the question, which was answered by the nurse as he thought the patient wanted it.

"Lord! yes; you sent him to the smoky range in good shape. Now take a snooze and you'll feel better."

And then the nurse wondered mightily that his patient had straightway lapsed again into unintelligible jargon, and that his fever arose several degrees.

And after that had passed, ages of chaos, with, through it all, the voice of an old sweetheart that called to him, and ever above him the face of Élouise, that was such a silent, shadowy sort of a presence; and now the finale of it all was this rock wall, with the warm sunlight making a golden glory of its grayness, and even here was Élouise.

How to account for it all he did not know, and in trying to conjecture he only brought great throbs of pain to his head and a strange confusion to his brain; and when the girl came back he lay with closed eyes, as if sleeping.

"Here," she said, softly, and he saw her as he had in his dreams—always above him; and in her hands was a little trough made from the bark of a sapling and filled at the ends with woven reeds that were water-tight. "The water is cold," and she touched for an instant his forehead with her light fingers; "it is good for you—bathe."

But at his first awkward attempt to reach the primitive basin she motioned him to lie down, and herself wet the dead white moss which she used as a sponge by tying it in a little sheaf with a strip of fine bark.

"What an inventor you are, Élouise," he said, lazily, as the cool drops touched his face. "I can't be quite sure whether I'm awake or dreaming; but if you're a dream, you're a very nice one."

She seemed not to hear, or the only sign of it was a slight contraction of her straight brows—she whose eyes had held infinite tenderness when he lay unconscious; and she drew back as he laid his hand detainingly on hers.

"Where are we?" he asked; "I can't remember."

"In my home—in a nook of a mountain."

"No one else? Just you?"

"And you," she completed; "that is enough till you are strong."

"Will you tell me how I got here?"

"Walked. I walked with you in the night. Your head was sick, and the man who watched was asleep; then you escaped."

The man who watched! Then his impressions were correct; he had been guarded there in Collins' cabin. He did not reflect that invalids were also guarded; he was thinking only of Collins' words—of the unmistakable criminality implied by them.

"Then the man who gave me *this* was killed?"

She only looked at him with startled eyes, and all the color drifting from her face—the moment she had feared through days and nights was here.

"I don't remember killing him—did I get the knife, or how? But I was drunk—drunk!"

Her eyes, avoiding his, turned to the floor.

"But that wouldn't free me with a jury, I suppose," he

went on. "Justice would give a man an extra swing of the rope on that account. Did you think of that when you hid me—you, just a bit of a girl? Did no one else help?"

"No—other—knew."

The words fell with slow distinctness from her lips. She was telling no lie, but fate or her Manitou was doing it for her; and from the great sickness of dread that was overwhelming her she grasped at his mistake, as one in a whirlpool of waters will grasp at the nearest floating thing, though it keep him up but for a breath.

And her season of breath was given to her, though the beating of her heart seemed choking up her throat. She was dizzy, and put out one hand blindly as she turned and went out into the sunshine, out into the shimmer of leaves and the call of bird-songs, where, alone, she fell on her knees, huddling down there, whispering over and over "*Masahchie! masahchie!*" (evil—evil I), beating her breast at every repetition, as the teaching of her Roman church made natural in her self-accusation. But at heart, after all, she was still a pagan; for, rising suddenly, she flung back her head, reaching out her arms with a passionate gesture of appeal, of decision, of defiance.

"No, I can not! The black robes (the priests) say confess, repent, else the curse will come. I try; no use. See, Manitou!" and from her bosom she drew the little black cross, worn since baptism, and, closing her eyes, flung it far out, heeding not its fall. "Now I am yours; fight my battles against the curse. See! the beak of the eagle drives out *lucloa* (the cross.) I am your child by the talisman—only Indian, nothing else. Help me in evil as in good. I did not lie, but I can not now confess. If it is a curse for his sake, I claim it. Only, Manitou, spirit that guards! close his ears if any bird should carry to him the truth. That is all, that is all, Manitou!"

CHAPTER IX.

YOU SOLD ME!

AFTER that morning of awakening he was not so well; the eager life rushing back in such haste to question—to confused reasonings—had left him weaker. But with each sleep that fell over him he awakened a little more clear in his thoughts, though he did not question much. He knew now why he was hidden away so, why the girl who made herself his servant never left him but a little while alone. Sometimes he wondered that she should have done all this for him; but generally, with the passivity of fever weakness, he accepted it as a matter of course.

"You sick—much sick; it is a shame for any who would not help the sick," was all she said, trying to lessen all importance of her own acts.

"You are a better Christian than I, little one," he said, looking at her with caressing eyes. "I've seen many a man sick without giving him a second thought. But they always told me you were 'good Indian;' even the priests say that, don't they?"

"No, they will not," she said, quietly; "not any more. I am no Christian. See!" and she pointed to her breast, where the feather of an eagle rose and fell with each breath, while above it the beak and claw swung pendent. "This is of the Indian prayer (religion); this the talisman of my Manitou."

"But what difference between the Christian's God and the Indian Manitou?" he asked, listlessly, not supposing there was any; but she answered, sadly enough:

"There is much. The God of the church helps only the good; my Manitou helps both good and evil hearts, if only they are strong and can brave much for him."

"And can you?"

She did not answer; the quizzical tone disturbed her. She never had ready speech for people who laughed at the faiths; and her thoughts were with the cross flung out from her among the quivering aspen-leaves, and the certainty that the curse of the church God was drawn down on her by the act that chose the help of Manitou.

She was braiding the green split wands of the water-rush that lay in coils about her. The days would come, when the sun was burning, when, to gain strength, he must walk both in the noon and the dark, and she was making a substitute for the cloth hat left back there in High-Low.

Somehow she had never looked so really Indian to him before. Had Manitou really set his seal on her with that symbol of the eagle's claw? Had he also given her that shy consciousness of self which he could not remember as a part of the little half-breed with the reckless temper whom he had known a year ago?

She had laughed then—that year ago; she had run races like a boy for a bit of silver coin. She would flash back looks of rage at him if he teased her as she held his horse at Antoine's door, but woe unto any rash Indian youth who endeavored to forestall her in that task. More than once had howls broken the peace of High-Low, and scratches and bites, with dire threats, had left her triumphant at the door of the hostelry.

That was the Élouise he had known, a fighting, industrious little vagabond, contemptuous of her mother, yet doing battle for her valiantly, fighting with any who dare ridicule the strong weakness of that personage. But this shy, devoted weaver of rushes was something very different.

She reminded him for the first time of those chaste-eyed sisters of hers whom he had seen once in the lodges by the long Lakes of the Arrows—lodges whose people have forgotten the ancient pagan rites of the Kalispels and, with the later name of Colville, have taken in all faith the cross of Christ from the hands of the priesthood. It reaches them in many a lodge of the wilderness, and under its slender shadow is lived a life patriarchal in its simplicity, undeviating in its rules of duty and morality.

He had admired those soft-toned, seldom-speaking Indian women, who had looked at him with shy good-will but would speak to him not at all. In his meeting with various tribes or clans that graceful nation remained pre-eminent for virtues unexpected, and for an atmosphere of refinement in their womankind.

He remembered them when looking at Élouise, with her downcast eyes and deft fingers, and thinking of their beauty was suddenly conscious of hers.

"Did you live here alone before I came?" he asked, and felt a sense of pleasure when she nodded her head.

"All but one day," she added; "that day Henri come."

"Henri?"

"He is 'Father' now—you say 'priest;' once he was only Henri—a boy, and was a good hunter. He showed me the traps to make when I was still little. He carried me often that I might come north with the hunters."

"And he brought you—here?"

She looked up at the abrupt speech that expressed annoyance.

"Brought? No. He found it first long ago, very long, and told me. He thought other people than ours had lived here, and I never forgot. Then once—last year—La Mestina was mad; in a passion. I was not so big then, but I ran away. I found this where Henri had told me of. I was

all alone. I was happy all day. I wanted never to go back and see people or smell rum. Then Henri came from over the mountain. They told him I was gone; but he found me," and she smiled at the thought of his skill—"the black robe never tangles his feet."

"I know the one you mean—a monk—a half-breed?"

A scarcely perceptible tone of depreciation in his speech made her answer quickly:

"It is so; his mother was all Colville. He is more Indian than me, so he is better than me."

"He could be no better friend," he asserted, looking at her with amused eyes, and noting the flush of color that had swept over her face for an instant. He liked her best when she showed temper. He understood her best. "But how comes it that your valiant friend did not choose the trail and the trap instead of the black gown? He should have found a squaw and sat in his own tepee."

"No—not Henri," she said. "He never look much at squaws—only at me when I was little; 'little eagle,' he called me, like a boy. Then his father, who was good, wanted to give what was best to the church, so he gave Henri; that is how."

"A very interesting 'how,' too. And so Henri was an offering on the altar of this Canadian Abraham; and you?"

"Nothing of me. We were cut off from the tribe long ago. La Mestina can never go in their lodges, though of the chief blood. Henri was tall and knew much when we saw him again; much of books and all things. But he is never traitor to his people. He comes back instead of to stay where the towns are. The hunters call him '*Le plet et le molo*.'"

"The priest of the wilds? Well, he looks it. I stumbled on his camp once when he was coming east by the low pass. Is he around here now?"

"May be, but I think not. It is long since I have seen him—when the birds flew south last."

"Eh! Why, he was there—there at Antoine's the evening I got down from the mines; the evening—"

But she dropped the plaited reeds, turning away her head with a little gesture of protest, and he checked his speech with an idea that she felt an added abasement in being gambled away in presence of any of the Pharisees of her mother's people.

"Never mind; come here!" he said, holding out his hand from the couch. "He had left for the mountains before dark, I think. But no matter who was there, you must not worry now; do you hear me, Élouise? I will be strong some day; then we will take the trail, you and I. We will go far, to the very end of the Arrow Lake River, and then on down the coast, where the snow never falls, where the flowers bloom all the year, where no one of the Gold Range or the Selkirk hills will ever come, where you need never work, and I need never hide. What do you say, my lass Louise—is it yes?"

She did not touch his hand. Something in her heart ached when he spoke kindly and caressingly to her, and it was most natural for him to speak to all women in that appealing tone. It really meant less from him than most men; it was so much of a habit. But its gentleness overwhelmed her with a sense of her own unworthiness, she who had driven that knife into his shoulder! She longed to kneel at his feet and confess. Yet the first actual fear of her life held her back, and in the complexity of emotion she could only say, dully:

"Thou the chief, Élouise the slave; and the trail is good for you to take."

"That sounds well; but you are not the most submissive slave I've ever seen," and he looked at her reproachfully.

"How is it you will not even touch my hand now that I am getting better? That is not friendly."

"Have you wanted for anything I could get?" she asked in return; "a best friend can do only what he is able."

"A friend would take my hand," he insisted, curious to know what her strange reserve meant. And he learned when she turned her black eyes, large with feeling, on him, a mingling of love and rage, of pride and abasement in the glance.

"You sold me to the stranger," she said, and walked away, leaving the wet rushes unplaited and the coil of braid looking like a flat green snake on the stone floor.

With the petulance of physical weakness, he felt angered at her leaving him like that. Her sullen briefness left him no chance of apology, of explanation, or defense.

"Has she just remembered it now?" he asked himself. "She knew it all the time I was helpless here; but I suppose it's Indian nature to hold grudges."

And then he called "Élouise! Élouise!" but no returning step answered, only the twittering of the birds that built above his window ceased for a moment. That was all the notice any living thing took of his voice.

If she had reproached him, as he felt it was perfectly reasonable to expect; had complained in woman fashion, and in the same fashion let herself be coaxed into forgiving and forgetting; if she had done like that, as would have done the greater part of the women he knew, then he would have understood just how to manage her. She would have sobbed away her moody anger and been petted into smiles again, and the miserable days of hiding would have become less dreary by her presence. But if she was going to stand on her dignity and an Indian grudge in that fashion—

The mark of the sun fell from the wall to the floor, gilding the pale yellows and deep greens of the rushes in its

passing, and, finally withdrawing its lances of light, sent within only its reflections; and then he knew the noon was near. But not Élouise.

The stillness and loneliness of those rock walls were horrible to him. He liked the hills, but would have made a poor hermit. Human voices and laughter were the things that made half his life; the crowds and the contest of wits, and the genial companionship of men and women—those were the things worth living among to him, and he chafed against the need to stay housed there with a fitfully sullen Indian as an only companion. And the worst of it all was the debt he owed her.

For even in his impatience at her he did not forget the slave-like devotion she had shown him. It weighed on him—made him feel contemptible, remembering his last game of cards; and Mr. Dunbar was little given to taking that view of himself—but when that squaw made it impossible for him to seem anything else.

So he argued, and fretted and fumed in his loneliness until, with much thinking, his head began a most tumultuous throbbing. He was feverish, and the water within reach of his hand had stood until its freshness was gone. He longed, as though in a desert, for the cool flow of waters unfettered, and, following the wish, he arose and walked slowly, for the first time, at midday, out through the larger room. But it took such a few steps to make the perspiration break out with a little chill all over him; and on the boughs of spruce heaped against the wall he sank dizzily before he could reach the entrance.

“Élouise! Élouise!” he whispered, moaningly, and even in his weakness thought how right it would serve her to come back and find him there—more ill through her desertion. She would be sorry then. He would be willing to endure the sickening weakness for that.

But she did not come; and finding a stick among the dry bits of wood in the corner, he used it as a cane, and with its aid, and groping along the wall to steady himself, he finally reached the entrance and dropped down beside the cool, clear rill that crept from the shadows there.

It was luxurious just to dash the water up and feel it splash in his face, and drink great draughts of its clearness; and the wind was blowing briskly from the west—the odorous wind, with the breath of the ocean mingled with it. It and the cool earth and the immense spread of mountain and valley, river and lakes below was so welcome a change that he did not attempt to move. He would not go back to that rock wall alone; in his weakness he had a morbid antipathy to the very comfortable shelter—it was so repelling; it spoke to him of nothing human; and with Élouise gone—no, he told himself, he would not re-enter; if he died from dragging himself out there—well, he would die; that was all. She would find him there on her return—she would be sorry—she—

And then he finished his determination in dreamland, for the exhaustion of the little walk, aided by the lulling winds, had brought him so delicious a drowsiness that he made no attempt to fight it off.

It seemed to him that he slept hours—a sleep freer, less dreamful than those on the couch in the cave. Closing his eyes on that view of the rock wall did not bespeak absolute rest. Sometimes Clevents' face, calm and colorless, seemed to repeat itself in the shadows. But the wind had blown away that specter—was it only to replace it by another?

A swift chill crept over him as he asked the question on awakening, wondering what it was that wakened him, anyway. Through his slumber he fancied he had heard a little feminine “oh!” and without moving he opened his eyes,

that were turned up to the sky, and there, only a few feet above him, bent forward another thing of dreams—a white-dressed body, with tresses of yellowish hair showing under a white hat. He did not see the wings, but had a conviction that he could if she turned around—which she did not.

She bent above there, looking down at him with curious, startled eyes, but saying never a word. It was a specter, without doubt, for he thought he had never seen a woman so fair—so white. Only children sometimes are so; but this was not a child, either.

Without a word, he tried to rise—to get closer. He did get on his feet, without once removing his eyes from those above, though the white form seemed to draw away—away!

Then the bushes at which he grasped crashed under his weight, and as the specter fled it seemed to take his life with it, for when Élouise dragged herself up the mountain at sunset, he was still there, and still unconscious.

When he reopened his eyes, it was the shadowy rock roof again arching above him, and between it and himself the face of the young squaw, who turned away and did not speak when he uttered her name. He did not guess it was to hide the great gladness, so near tears, that shone in her eyes.

“You are here, and she—where is she?”

She turned toward him at that question, and shook her head.

“There is no one else—no woman here—or is it a woman you mean?”

“Yes.”

He looked at her long and wonderingly. The substitution of the black-eyed squaw for the angelically fair face was yet an unsolved problem.

"You saw no one?"

The girl hesitated before speaking; frank, open speech was growing rare with her.

"Yes," she said at last. "I stayed long down the slope, because there were people on the mountain. I laid low because of their eyes."

"Who?—tell me."

"A miner of High-Low and his wife, and then some other men I saw. They passed me close in the brush, going up the river. They took the west trail, that leads to the top on the other side; they did not find my path."

"A man's wife? All in white clothes, was she?"

Élouise bent over him, passing her cool hands over his brow.

"No," she said, soothingly; "it was not so. The woman dressed dark; only the child had a dress of white. It was little; it slept as she passed on the horse. Sleep now; it was not sleep you had there in the sun. You were weak, and the sun touched your head."

"Likely," he agreed, hopelessly. "Yes, it was only a fancy, that and the sun that made me ill—all because you left me."

He had only just then remembered that she had left him; but she knew nothing of that, and her voice had a tremulous humility in it as she bent before him.

"I will never leave you again; never, until you wish it," she said.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE FORT OF THE UNNAMED NATION.

FIRST in one direction and then in another, there had been more concerted sight-seeing in High-Low than ever before in the history of that ambitious hamlet; and the number of its leading citizens who were required to guard and care for two ladies during those little excursions spoke much for the terrors of the district, or little for the valor of the escort—if their services were among the necessary things.

“I never was so persistently waited on in my life,” declared Miss Raeforth, “nor so decidedly bored. The only exception, Mr. Ewing, is that shy friend of yours. Perhaps it is the enchantment of distance that is his, but I certainly find him enchanting above all others, if only he would grow a little more tame.”

Milt Ewing laughed and looked down at the bright face of his wife’s friend. He was not wise in the reading of girlish natures; and this dainty little one, with her affectionate, winning ways and quizzical speeches, that he always felt meant either more or less than she said, was an unsolved problem to him, but none the less attractive.

“I think you tease poor Redney until he’s afraid to come near you, for it can’t be inclination that keeps him away.”

“Don’t you begin,” she laughed, “for Mrs. Nannie and I are already growing dizzy from the varied compliments of the rest, and you need not say pretty things to make amends for your partner; he is incorrigible. Not once has he been gallant enough to go with us on our little

‘outings.’ I’m going to ask him to go as my escort next time, and see if he will refuse such a pointed invitation.”

But, to the surprise of the rest, he did not. When Miss Della rode forth at the head of their little picnic party, Redney rode beside her; not quite the Redney of the house-cleaning and saleratus days, although so short a time had passed since then. A sullen sort of dignity had given him added age, and his black eyes flashed menacingly over the faces of the others as he rode forward to join Miss Della Raeforth. If any of them had dared to grin! But they did not, and after a season of wary watching, his attitude relaxed somewhat, and in the gracious, questioning presence of the young lady he became almost sociable. It was the first time in the many days since her arrival that she had heard him talk — his flight at her approach had been so obvious.

“Why would you not go with us last week on our little canoe-trip?” she asked, with a determination to make him talk; his voice was so musical! “We only went a little way, just far enough up the river to enjoy a fish dinner out of doors. But we wanted you.”

“May be the baby did,” he agreed; “but there was enough of you to take care of him without me along.”

“The baby! Do you suppose Mrs. Ewing and I don’t want society as well as that baby?”

“You’ve got the whole camp,” he said, laconically; “and I have not heard yet where you are all bound for to-day.”

“Oh, some mountain. I get the names jumbled up, there are so many; but there is a lovely cascade, and a wonderful view, and it is not far away. I guess no one in particular is guide, but they all seem to know where it is.”

“Yes, I know too,” he answered, briefly, and turned to Ewing.

“Is it Thunder Mountain you’re after?”

"That's it; going to the cascade, and fish a little below. I've never seen the place, but Andy knows it."

Andy was the gentleman who had proven out of his element as a watchful nurse for Dunbar, and who now looked correct as a temperance lecturer as he rode near Mrs. Ewing, gorgeous in a yellow and blue striped necktie, with a gleaming bit of iron pyrites in his flannel shirt-front. Glancing at him, Redney felt newly conscious of some swell additions to his own toilet in the shape of a new hat and the finest, highest boots that had ever covered his shapely legs. In fact, the careful arraying of the outer man was having a boom in High-Low.

"What trail you making for?" he asked, and sneered a little when told.

"If you want to see anything worth riding for, why don't you take the *other* side of the mountain?" he demanded. "You can go near the top there and see straight west to the glaciers, and across the Columbia to the Gold Range. If you've been tramping the valleys and water-courses, it would be a change."

"But there is no trail open," objected Collins.

Redney looked at him superciliously. "Ain't there?" remembering that gentleman's slighting remarks on his own trail-hunting. "Well, may be I can find some Indian jugglers to help us find one."

"But we'll get no fish," said Ewing.

"I'll agree to find you a fishing-place if you want to see the glaciers," said Redney, "and I'll put you on a trail that the horses can carry you over, too; a trail made and given the 'go by' before any of this gang saw daylight. What do you say?"

"Why, of course," said Ewing, looking undecidedly at Collins.

"Why, of course, we want to see the glaciers and the Gold

Range, and the old trail," broke in Miss Della, "and if we can go horseback all the way that is an advantage, is it not? We can not, you say, to the cascades."

And what man among them would cross Miss Della's wish? especially when seconded in a mild way by Mrs. Nannie, who was influenced by the promise of not having any walking to do.

And so it happened that instead of following the ways of Élouise, the heads of their horses were turned to the right, and leaving the road they followed Redney's lead. It took them straight into the timber that reached from the mountain down to the edge of the Columbia—great giants of the wood that shaded no underbrush. At times one of the fallen would bar their way and make them circle its huge trunk, but except for that the slope was much like a great shaded park, cool, and fragrant with spicy wood-scents. Sometimes they would cross the fern-feathered brooks that carry the cool water down to the river, and on the borders of some the ladies insisted on dismounting and seeing with their own eyes the show of "color" caught by the grass-roots, and telling of gold in the hills above, and, altogether, Redney received several words of commendation for leading them away from the thick brush that grows in the wake of forest-fires, and into the great woods where gigantic pillars uphold the green roof.

And then, where a great green hollow went up into the mountain, their guide left them—all but Miss Della, who insisted on prospecting too, and together they rode up along where the water fell in white and green cascades over many stones, on up where the girl could see never a trace of former travel, until an isolated rock of huge proportions arose like an impassable barrier ahead of them; and Redney gave an exclamation of satisfaction, and fired two shots as signal for the rest to follow.

"But how are we to ride over that?" she objected. "Surely this can't be the old trail where you said we ride all the way."

"We don't go over it; come, I will show you."

And following him, the hoofs of their horses soon struck a floor made by the rock, and rode into what seemed a great hall that arched overhead and led up a slight incline; at its end a shimmer of green showed.

"Why, this looks like a tunnel masons would make!" she exclaimed; and he smiled as he told her to ride close to the wall and note the marks of the drills still plain despite places where the lichen had crept on the flint-like surface.

"May be there were masons here at sometime," he agreed; "they pushed a good road through this pebble, anyway. I heard an old prospector say they must have had a fort up here, for there's a rock ledge near the top on the other side, and this was their main gate to the whole upper mountain."

"They? Of whom are you speaking?"

"We don't know that. Just people who ranged through here once. They've left some signs, but no one knows their name rightly."

"Indians?"

He nodded. "Ages and ages ago, men say."

The girl rode between the rock walls to the upper end of the tunnel, and then returned, listening to the clear, bell-like ring of horse-shoes on the rock floor.

"Why, this is wonderful, really it is! You must tell me more of the signs they have left; and is there never a one left to tell of their race or nation?"

"Well," he admitted, reluctantly, "there is one squaw in the Northwest who lets on to know, but she's a rank Indian witch, and her word ain't a thing to bet on. And she always swears she come of that old nation herself, but she never mentions its name; it's just the unnamed nation."

"And you knew what an odd old place you were bringing us to, but never mentioned a word of aught but the view?" she asked, wonderingly. "The view! I don't know what it is yet, but I am sure your unnamed nation is much more interesting. Tell me some more."

"There is no more. The Indians say much, but no one is sure; only La Mestina—"

"Who is that?"

"Just the witch; they call her princess yet, though she's outlawed, and drunk most of the time. She's of the chief line of the Kalispels that turned in with the Colvilles. She says her family goes back through Colville and Kalispel and a dozen nations that have changed and forgotten their names—clear on back to the ones who had this mountain. That's what she claims, and no Indian denies it. Scared of her Manitou, I reckon."

"Manitou? but I thought these tribes had given up the Indian God."

"So they have, all but some stray pagans—that's what the black robes call them, and that's what the old princess is—a pagan from away back."

"And where does she live, this pagan princess? Are we likely to see her? Can't you hunt her up for us?"

"I can, but I won't," said Mr. Redney, concisely, and then glanced at her darkly. "Do you want her picture to put alongside of mine in your book?"

"I—well, you needn't look so ferocious about it," she stammered. "I'm sure I'll give you back the picture if you are vexed about it. Are you vexed?"

He only looked at her, and then turned his eyes tranquilly toward the trail over which the rest of the party were coming.

"Well, I would not take a dislike to anyone just because they wanted my photograph," she said, poutingly, and then

laughed; "and when I go away I will leave you the biggest one I can make of myself in exchange. Will that weaken your warlike attitude toward me?"

"You laugh at us all up here, just like you will laugh over our pictures when you go down to the States," he said, hotly. "I know them men down there," and he nodded toward High-Low, "are fools. They think it's nice if you even laugh at them. I don't."

"No need to tell me that," she declared, a little more self-possessed when she saw him lose his coolness. "Laugh! Why, I'll soon be afraid to even smile in the same province with you, though you *can* laugh yourself. They tell me you used to, but you won't for us. Why? Don't you like us, Mr. Redney?"

"My name don't happen to be Mister," he said, briefly, ignoring the rest of her chatter.

"Well, tell me what it is, then. I've really never heard, except your nickname."

He hesitated a little, and then answered: "The nickname is all there is to it. Folks in the diggings are satisfied if they have that much of a one, and can stick to it."

"But," persisted the inquisitive young person, "haven't you a—an Indian name, anyway?"

"I haven't even an Indian tribe," he retorted. "I may belong to the people who made this," and he pointed to the rock walls, "or I may get my red blood from the Diggers or the Snakes."

"Nonsense!" she laughed; "you don't believe that, and you know it. I would sooner believe you of these masons; and it may be so—why not? Since there is no other heir to their greatness, I shall take the liberty of thinking you one."

"But there is one, Élouise—" Then he stopped. It never had occurred to him until now that if the princess

was of the unnamed nation so also was the girl who crept like a thief into their old strongholds.

"Élouise? Who is that?"

"Another squaw—La Mestina's daughter."

"Oh!" and the glance that accompanied the word sent a flush over his face. "And is this heiress young, and—pretty?"

"I—I don't know. Yes, she is; she's young."

"But you will not speak of her charms to strangers? Never mind; you are right enough. But I thought she was rather pretty myself."

He pretended not to hear or understand the gay significance of her speech. The rest of the party were almost in sight, and their voices drifted up through the whispers of giant spruce.

"I wonder," she said, after a little, "how often sentinels have stood like this and listened for hostile advances from below? Often and often, I suppose, if this was really a sort of military stronghold. Can't you imagine yourself one of those sentinels?"

"Not any," he answered, with little sign of sympathy for her fancy. "And then, if old Mestina talks straight and is posted, this never was a fighting fort, but a refuge place, a place where the murderers and that sort skipped for, so she says; a tepee of Manitou, I reckon, and their lances couldn't cross the ledge boundary. All Indian lies, I reckon."

"Well, I like to think it true, anyway; and, you know, in olden times there *were* cities of refuge like that in the East; the Bible tells of them. So why should there not have been in this land? I don't care how drunk your princess gets, I want to see her if she tells such interesting stories as that. I am delighted that you brought us here."

And so were the others, as they rode through the echoing tunnel and reached the land above, where the quivering

aspens tossed like boughs of pale-tinted bloom; and then on, up around a great curve where of old the trail had led, where the traces of it yet remained in the deep gully that now looked like the stony bed of a dry creek, and strangely clear of obstructions. But only the stones and slight siftings of soil were on that part of the mountain—no heavy timber to be blown by the winds—and in places one could go for rods with never a hesitation as to where the old trail lay. One could almost fancy the spirit feet of the dead unnamed nation keeping plain the path through their refuge. Sometimes it led them along the top of the ledge that dropped its wall thirty feet below. Sometimes it was narrower, but never enough so for a pass. The mountain seemed, a half-mile from its summit, to be girded by the invincible terrace that had kept its form intact through centuries.

“How in the world does it happen that High-Low knows so little of this?” asked Mrs. Ewing, as they halted to drink at a spring that bubbled up through white pebbles; “not one of you have I ever heard mention it.”

“I’ve heard tell of it,” acknowledged Mr. Collins, “but I never pinned much faith in it, and didn’t allow it was so near here, anyway. But this is the place, I reckon. Big Medicine, the reds call it. Did they tell you?” he asked, turning to the young guide.

“May be,” he returned; and then pointed out what looked like a bit of summer sky dropped on the summit of a lower hill that was close on their north.

“There is your fishing-grounds,” he said. “There’s a little pass goes down to it, unless it’s choked—so they tell me, but I never went over. Whether the rest of the stories are true or not, the Indians never fish in the lake, though they say it’s full of them; but some old witch notion makes all tribes leave it for the refugees.”

"Then for to-day we'll be the refugees," said Mr. Ewing, briskly. "Up where those dwarfish trees are will be a good dinner-site, and we'll get our tackle ready."

Up at the dwarfish trees they were above every wall that shut out the view. Across the river they had left below them arose the Gold Range, with its hills piled upon hills. Beyond, and through the dips or passes, the more distant waves of verdure drifted into the blue-green that was like sea-ripples; and above all, that scheme of emeralds and palest turquois, the glaciers of the Selkirks, gleamed north and south of them, the noonday sun striking them into slivers of white light, and in the distance tingeing them with warmest opal.

Ewing turned to his chum in irritation.

"What have you been hiding all this for?" he demanded. "We've been here for months, and I've never heard you mention it."

"Forgot to, may be."

"That shows what a heathen red you really are," was the candid retort, flanked by a smile of comradeship. "Who but an Indian would keep quiet about such a bit of wonder?"

"Oh, he was guarding the altars of his ancestry," explained Miss Raeforth.

"And, luckily for us, grew ashamed of his selfishness this morning," added Mrs. Ewing, who was giving a final pat to the bed for the baby; a bed so soft, and so fragrant with spruce-boughs, that he quickly rolled from drowsiness into sleep on it. "But now that we are here, do get some of those sacred fish, and get them quick!"

Miss Raeforth went with the fishing party as far as the little pass—a natural cleft in the great rock, and barely wide enough for one to squeeze through, and one not difficult to close with bowlders against the outside world.

It was all like enchanted ground to her curious young eyes, lifted by that stone terrace above the commonplace world they had left in High-Low, and the scant history given by their guide was tantalizing.

She easily found her way back to the camp, where Mr. Collins was already gathering twigs and all sorts of combustible matter to fry the fish with, and among the trio was discussed one theory after another regarding the extinct race in whose domain they were prowling, when the girl suddenly remembered the daughter of the princess.

"Mr. Collins, who is Élouise?" she asked; and Mrs. Ewing gave him one appealing glance and felt herself grow pale.

"Why, she—oh, Élouise? Well, she's just a squaw that sort o'—kind o' loafed around High-Low a spell. Just a half-breed squaw."

"Pretty?"

"Well," he said, "I hain't ever seen the man yet that said she was. Squaws generally look a heap alike. She's just like the others."

"I've seen some 'others,' as we passed the Colvilles, that were not all alike," she persisted. "Some fairer than any of the States Indians; in fact, they were the first ones I've ever seen that suggested Fenimore Cooper."

"Was he a reservation red?"

And, in the girl's laughter and the matron's attempt at explanation, the latter breathed more freely, seeing the danger drift by for one more time.

She could scarcely tell how it had begun—that deception of the young girl; but one thing sure, no one imagined it would have to be kept up so long. Mr. Raeforth was making but a flying trip, not stopping at the mine forty-eight hours, and at High-Low barely two. He had heard a version of "drinking a little—Dunbar gambled

and had trouble over the stakes; cut some by an Indian, and had a spell of fever; went off his base and took a moonlight flitting; most likely dead in the brush."

And that was all the principal stockholder in the Little Dell heard. The social lights of High-Low had no notion of letting capital think they had an objectionable hamlet. On as slight a thing as a chance visit has the scale tipped for a camp and a boom of prosperity commenced. High-Low needed the boom—needed it bad, decided the city fathers, and should a chance stroke over a game be allowed to dim its future glory?

Some of the more jealous, eying the clerical black that adorned capital when its duster was removed, suggested the advisability of trying to bribe Miss Lou and Miss Liz, and the various breeds of their various sisters, into a vow of strict retirement while the speculator was seeing the town, that he might be "played" on its moral aspect.

But, sad to relate, the feminine residents refused to take a hand in the moral game; the gentlemen had to play it alone, and with doubtful success. Mr. Raeforth showed very little interest in the probable future of the settlement. He had to get back to reach the Pacific Coast in as short a space of time as possible to meet other speculators with whom he was to make a Mexican tour of inspection, and did not seem greatly vexed that Miss Della, at the last moment, decided to remain north. He did halt long enough to offer a reward for the recovery of Dunbar, who had been the adopted son of his sister, and who, leaving him penniless at her death, had begged her brother to encourage the childish liking between Della and the boy, and had only died contented when promised that if Della objected an allowance should be set aside from her inheritance that would allow the young fellow to continue life among the comparatively well-to-do. "That is, if he is not

lazy," stipulated the Jove of the occasion; and the young fellow proved so far from that, that he grasped eagerly at the offer of Western experience and work. And Mr. Raeforth, seeing that the liking of the young folks was lessening all possibility of the allowance, let the responsibility of the lad's future fall off his shoulders.

Three years had passed since they had seen him at all, three years that had changed the hoydenish little girl of short skirts and adoring eyes into a less demonstrative little girl in longer skirts and an ingrained appreciation of the romantic in her mind; and all her romances for many years had held but one hero—the handsome fellow who had lifted her off her feet to say good-by just as he had done when she was very little, and who said as he kissed her that he would not dare come in reach of her again for four years, else he would certainly elope with her instead of waiting for the socially correct wedding; and that would never do, for Della was tabooed from marriage until she was nineteen, the only restriction laid on her by her father's will in conjunction with the very neat little property that Uncle Raeforth had cleverly doubled and doubled again many times, until Della was probably heiress to more than she knew of.

But if she cared for its advantages, it was more for the future than the present, more for the time when her handsome, winning fiancé should share it with her, should come back from the wilds with the charm of adventure adding to his glory in her eyes; *then*, indeed, wealth would be good to have. Wealth can buy success, social or political, when accompanied by the merits Della felt sure that Neil possessed; and so Miss Della dreamed worldly dreams that were in odd contrast to the unworldly romances she gave him part in; and his strange disappearance had in itself an element of the romantic that was not unpleasing.

if only he returned. It was not improbable that she herself was mentally posing a little because of the sad *finale* of her quest; and to end it according to all correct rules of her fancy, he must return after all, and her faith be rewarded by a meeting much more interesting than any heretofore chronicled by novelist.

And so this very petite, very practical romancer gathered plans to herself through her days of outing, and, despite the shakings of several heads, persisted in watching for him, and opened many times a locket she wore and looked at the gay face pictured there—a face with laughing eyes and curled lips, and never even a mustache to shadow the correct features.

“Of course he has changed in three years; so have I—a little,” she told Mrs. Ewing, who admired the face to Miss Della’s satisfaction. “He wrote me last year he was wearing ‘mustachios,’ but I know no such adornment will change his face much—not enough to be mistaken for any other. I should know him if I could see only his eyes peeping through a chink in our cabin; and that’s how he will come back, Mrs. Nannie—for he *will* come. And think of his surprise when he finds me waiting for him!”

And Mrs. Nannie said little, but sympathized much with the little stranger, and wished with all her might that the handsome face had never bent above that gambling-table, and had really possessed the godlike attributes Della believed it did.

“But if the poor fellow is dead, she might as well be let keep her pleasant thoughts of him,” decided her chaperone, and did much maneuvering that truths unpleasant might not mar them.

Some of the gentlemen of High-Low swore stealthily when they learned from her own candid lips that the man she called cousin was to be her husband some day.

"What in time a man leaves luck like that behind him for, *I* can't see," was the unanimous verdict; "and we'd be doing her a service if we did find him dead and prove it to her. The chump that picks up squaws and leaves a little girl like that to worry don't deserve to be let live, anyway."

Redney was the one of all the rest who said never a word, and did not seem to think the possession of the young lady—for all her dollars—was a thing worth fighting for; and it was with a distinct frown on his face that he watched her sauntering away from the others after the sacred fish dinner, to which they all gave wondrous praise.

"Oh, do come and sit down," called Mrs. Ewing. "You are not really enjoying the delights of this place at all. One must rest and gaze to do that."

"You are resting enough for two, and I am going on a *lone* tour of adventure in the meanwhile!" answered the girl; and Mr. Collins, who had arisen from his lounging-place, resumed it at sound of the accented word.

"I am too comfortable here to risk being made uncomfortable by Miss Raeforth ordering me back," declared Mr. Ewing; "and if our guide will only be accommodating and tell us some more of this mountain and the fish preserve over there, I'll ask no more of the day."

But their guide had few words for them. His eyes were busier than his tongue, and they were directed to the lone adventuress until she vanished from sight.

"Is there any danger in her rambling away like that?" asked Mrs. Ewing, suddenly, as she chanced to note Redney's gaze.

"Not likely; too high for snakes, and nothing grazes here unless it's mountain sheep."

But the girl saw neither; not anything living crossed her way, though now and then bird-songs would come up on the air, and far out an eagle drifted and drifted around

some unseen eyrie. Its still grace fascinated her, its strength and poise had so serene a beauty. Suddenly across her appreciation a sickening revulsion came—the remembrance of having once in the South watched just such a stately circling thing—a thing that a moment later had swooped downward to carrion; it brought back to her the thought that the things of air and the beasts of the forest might be even now circling the remains of that handsome face whose picture she wore.

“Oh, it is horrible—horrible! Neil, why don’t you come back?” she whispered—“whether dead or alive, why don’t you come back?”

She was standing on the great terrace; in watching the eagle she had moved nearer its edge than she knew, and leaning over to look at the great ropes of vine that draped it she barely restrained herself from screaming. It was such an uncouth-looking creature who lay below there, just as she had seen drunken Indians sleeping with the hot sun in their faces.

But this one, though evidently drunk, was not an Indian. The shaggy beard that covered the most of his red face was brown, and his eyes, as he opened them, were bloodshot.

She was not aware of uttering a sound, but must have, for his gaze turned directly to her, a strange, frightened look in his eyes. And then she saw him stagger to his feet and toward her, reaching clutchingly upward in a way that filled her with terror.

She backed away, too frightened to call or to turn her eyes from those horribly eager ones; but when the cliff hid him from view she turned and fled.

Hearing no footsteps, she halted when in sight of the rest of the party. She had no idea of letting them see she was frightened if she could help it, and rested to gather scattered thoughts and lost breath.

Should she tell them that their camp of solitude was shared in part by some drunken vagabond, or—and this suited much better her little likings for mystery—should she keep quiet, if the vagabond did, and astonish them with her adventure when they reached High-Low?

She rather liked that last idea, and, glancing back, she saw never a sign of a follower, and decided she would say nothing, and then, happening to look directly ahead of her, saw Redney standing perfectly still looking at her. He had surely seen her running, and was evidently waiting for her to speak. Her resolution vanished.

“Did—did you see him?” she asked.

He shook his head, with a little look of relief on his face. Him? Then it was not Élouise.

“A man? Did he say anything, or scare you?”

“Well,” she acknowledged, “I was a little nervous at sight of him; he was an unexpected event, you know, sprawled down there in the sun. No, he did not speak, but I thought he was coming up after me, so I ran.”

“What does he look like—stranger?” and he took a step or so in the direction she had pointed.

“Oh, I don’t know. Just a very tall man, with brown hair and beard all over his face.”

“Young?”

“Had not time to determine even that,” she smiled. “I left too soon. I think he was drunk, for his eyes were so red-looking; and I know he was bareheaded and had a sort of wide Indian scarf around his shoulders.”

“Oh!” and he turned his face slightly away from her, and seemed debating as to who the man on the mountain could be. But the mention of that wide scarf had started conjectures that for a moment made him forget the girl beside him.

“Then you don’t know the man?” he asked at last.

"I do not," she answered, promptly, "and I don't want to. I don't admire that bloated, red-eyed style of beauty. I've been watching to see him appear above that ledge."

"Well, what do you want me to do?"

"Do? Why, nothing. If he does not climb up to bother us, we can afford to leave him alone, can't we? and then it would disturb Mrs. Ewing if he should prove an unpleasant addition to our picnic. I had intended to say nothing of him until we got away from here; but I scarcely believe that he could scale that wall, it seemed rather high there."

"At what point?"

She pointed, and he walked in that direction. Once he looked back and noted that she was looking unconcernedly across to the Gold Range. The identity of the unknown man troubled her but little. No such swift suspicion had come to her as to him.

He reached the edge of the terrace and leaned over. No sign there of the man with the scarf. He arose and looked toward the foot of the mountain; plainly there was the slight dip where the stream of the *tumwata* crept downward. He was far above the falls, and it was somewhere near that stream that she must have her hiding-place—the place he had tried to lead those strangers away from. Had she really come farther up the height than he supposed? Could it be from the lake of the old nation that she brought those fish, she a girl and alone, when even the more venturesome of the tribes cared little to go alone above the terrace? And that man!

"A very tall man, with brown hair and beard all over his face," he mused; "and bareheaded, too. Wonder if she's forgotten the man she was looking for?"

But Miss Della was looking for a very different order of man—for a gay smile and a covert caress of glance; for a

lordly, handsome individual with a mustache; and nothing in the vagabond under the terrace suggested kinship with her ideal.

"If it *is*," he debated, as he laid himself prone to look over the cliff—"if it is, then Élouise lied like a claim-jumper."

But nothing human could he see to prove his suspicion. There was the little spring that glided out from under the overhanging rock, and his keen glance noted the woven grass at the edge of it, and a cluster of leaves stripped from a bush near that lay wilting on the warm stones. But the man who had staggered under the hanging rock he did not see, and could not without clambering down, and he did not care enough for that. He had seen enough. Yes, the home of Élouise must be there. And the man?

CHAPTER XI.

THE PICTURE IN THE LOCKET.

A DAY later Redney was again at the cascade. His idea that the brain of Élouise was touched, and that he must not interfere or cross-question her, had vanished.

"Then it ain't a dead man you have hid here?" he demanded; and she said:

"I never told he was dead, but I feared much he would be. No, I think he is to live now; and may be, after all, it will be well."

But her words were not very sure, and her eyes avoided Redney's. She felt a new element in his manner to her, one of disapproval, and she knew not of what.

"May be it will not be long I trouble you," she said at last. "Some day, when there is money enough, we will go, so he says, away—far."

"And I thought you was spunky," he sneered, contemptuously. "You!—and here you are packing traps like a mule for that fellow. Where's your church religion? Don't it tell you better than to live like that? I've a mighty big notion to call for that reward and give him up."

He scarcely knew how she got to her feet so quickly, but she was there, and close above him.

"No, you will never tell," she said, grimly—"never; if you did it would kill me, but you would die first."

He looked at her a moment. He could understand her better than he could have done a month before; at the same time, he was impatient with the feelings he comprehended.

"Don't talk like that, Louisa," he said, a little sadly. That night in the cabin he had felt like her guardian, and rather joyed in the fact, and she had swept all that away in one erratic feminine impulse. "I'll help you, just the same. I'll be your friend, but—I'm all broke up myself."

"So he says," and she nodded understandingly. "His head is queer. He sees things—things that are not. But that does not matter; you must never tell—never."

"Loony, is he?" he asked. "Well, that changes things some—makes it some harder on you, too; but I'll keep quiet and see that no one tracks you. It was me led them around the other trail yesterday."

"You? I saw only strangers—the man you like, and his woman, and then two other men."

"Oh, I was on ahead about that time, I reckon, but I was there; and I found your fishing-place, too," he added. "Say, what made you break for that point?" and he pointed upward; "it's out of the world."

"It is best; it was long ago the place for the hunted; why not now?"

"Only that 'now' there's no religion to keep people from following anything they trail, even if it goes to the tip-top; and don't Mestina say there used to be?"

"Yes. So did Henri once. Some 'old medicine' told him things like that. But their 'church' (religion) died; only the mountain is left."

"Yes, and so will you be as soon as that fellow is able to take the trail alone," he said, darkly; but she did not understand. She had his word that he would keep her secret. She liked him and believed in him more than in most men; but just then the opinion of the outer world or its people mattered not all to her. Under the terrace of that ancient refuge was the one atom of earth that dwarfed all the rest in her thoughts. To be sure, she was not possessed of great brain-power, and, to be sure, her views of most things were very narrow ones; for, after all, she was only a little Indian—self-ostracized from her gods, fearful of the hell of the Christians, yet stubbornly facing the prospect of it for the sake of her human god, and, withal, scarce realizing the meaning of the sentiment that had made her in turn fierce and devoted, proud, and then slave-like.

Did Redney guess? He showed less impatience toward her decisions, but his eyes followed her sadly as she left him. He had not, in his later visits, spoken of that early plan of his that Élouise should join him in an exodus from High-Low. In fact, High-Low as a social center was having more of a boom, in his estimation, than it had hitherto enjoyed. The ice had been broken by Miss Della. He was enrolled as one of her attendant spirits; his suggestions were in all things adopted by her, as the location of their picnic had proven. She had further agreed that they have a secret between them—the knowledge that the sacred hill had a disreputable-looking tenant.

"Only a miner sleeping off a drunk," suggested Redney, glibly, though suspecting strongly that he was telling a lie. "No harm in him, I reckon, but Milt's wife might be some backward about making picnics if she knew we run against such cattle."

"Then we won't tell her," said Miss Della, promptly. "I did tell her about seeing your pretty Indian that night, and I wonder why you did not."

"Had something else to think of," he said, brusquely.

"Nothing prettier, I'm sure," she retorted, with challenging eyes; "and I should like to know why you don't bring her to see us sometime. Don't you ever intend to?"

He had avoided answering somehow, but her words started him to thinking that, after all, there was no reason why Élouise should keep herself in hiding any longer. If the man were really alive, no question of murder could come up against her, and Redney gave a big sigh of relief at the thought, though not caring the price of a fox-scalp whether Dunbar was living or dead. And since no one had as yet connected her in the slightest way with his disappearance, why should she go to so much trouble to keep out of sight?

He whistled after her to call her back and speak of that, but she did not answer, and he would not follow her. He knew it would only irritate her, and then he might run against the man she called "master" and be irritated himself.

And the man was waiting for her with so warm a welcome in his eyes that her face flushed with gladness at his glance, and, though breathless from her haste, she commenced at once the preparation of breakfast. She had been up at dawn, and the sun was an hour high, yet she had eaten nothing until he could share it.

"I have waited hours to hear your step out there," he

complained; and she smiled that the time of her absence had seemed long.

"I had the fish to get," she explained; "they are over a mile from here, and they had to be taken to the foot of the mountain."

"To your friend?"

"Yes, he sells them; the people think he catches them. He is very good."

"Church man?"

She shook her head. "He never says," she admitted, reluctantly, "and he wears no church charm."

"Oh, well, they don't count for so much, do they?" he asked, carelessly; and she looked at him in a sort of wonder.

"But you wear one?"

"I? No;" and then he raised a hand to his breast and understood. "Oh, that is not a church charm, my child, only the picture of a little girl."

"I saw it," she persisted. "Are you ashamed of your church? Yesterday, when I found you, the lock of it was open, and it is like a face in the church that is like the mother of Christ."

"What an imagination you have!" he smiled. "Here, look closer; the mother of Christ does not tie back her curls with blue ribbons, and, surely, never looks at you with such roguish eyes."

She leaned forward, gazing at it with breathless interest.

"So white," she said at last; "so fine. Does she live, the one who is like that?"

He drew a quick sigh, passing his hand over his eyes perplexedly.

"I don't know, Élouise. Something is wrong with this brain of mine, or else spirits haunt our mountain, for I thought she came here yesterday—a face like hers, yet not the same," and he searched the pictured face closely.

"And if she is still alive, then it must be my head that is wrong, for no living woman but you climbs to this cave."

"None but me. And if she has died?"

He looked at her moodily, as she knelt by the little fire. Her question suggested the future—"if she has died?"

"It would not make much difference to my life now," he said at last. "If she has not, I have to all the people who ever knew me. I could not go back to them, to her, with an actual murder on my hands. I have died, Élouise; I, the man men knew, and the thing you resurrected, is known nowhere. Do you understand? I have not even a name to use. You must find me one. You find everything else I need up here; you must find a name. What is your Indian one? And we must find a trail, and—"

"Hush!" she said, softly, noting that his eyes were losing their steadiness. "Talk no more now. It is best for you to rest much to-day; the sun is to be hot. Yesterday it was so, and burned in your brain. To-day I shall watch; but it reaches even through stone walls if people are sick."

He smiled assent, and dropped back on the couch of leaves with closed eyes. The most pleasant thing in the whole dreary stay there was the watchful devotion of the girl, and her little ways of command when his welfare was concerned.

She brought his coffee, his gruel made of oats, and the whitefish crisped on the coals, and then spoke lowly lest his sleep should be disturbed too roughly.

"You remind me of oriental stories I used to read," he said, looking up at her; "and I never can realize that you are a northern Indian. Where did you learn to take care of sick folks?"

"I never learned; Indians don't have to learn."

"I believe you," he said, and watched her curiously as he drank the coffee and the gruel.

She sat over against the wall, her eyes half-averted, as was usual with her in his presence. He would much rather have seen those dark orbs turned toward him when he spoke; the fact that they sought the floor instead of his face often acted like a barrier to freedom of speech that would have been a boon sometimes. She was devoted in her care for him, but no squaw he had ever seen had impressed him so with the idea that her humility had a certain quality of pride in it; but the only actual outbreak of it had been shown when she left him so abruptly the day before. He felt guilty at times at the remembrance of her words, yet had attempted nothing in his own defense. Her care of him was doubly puzzling as he remembered her angry eyes; but his head was not yet steady enough to reason out such subtleties. He preferred watching her, without any thought whatever in his mind beyond the sense of pleasure in the pictures she made—odd, semi-oriental ones they seemed to him, until the fancy would envelop her in meshes of mystery, and imperceptibly strengthened her attraction for him.

"Since you object to me talking to you, you must talk to me," he decided. "Tell me of yourself—not of now, but of long ago; where you lived, who you are, and all—won't you?"

"I lived in the woods; I am Élouise; that is all," she replied; and he laughed at the briefness of the history.

"Now listen," he said, looking at her with an affectionate air of authority. "You are angry with me, and that is natural. But do you intend to remain a stranger to me forever just because I was drunk and silly that one night? Life is too short for hate, Élouise."

"Hate!—I do not," she began, but he raised his hand.

"Yet you will not forgive," he said, reproachfully. "Listen. I swear I had no wish to part with you. No; I

was glad when my luck won you. Will you not believe? It was the drink made me crazy. I scarcely know how it was I put you up in the cursed game. I know I meant to bet this, as it was all the gold I had left," and he pointed to the locket with the angelic face in it. "How it came that I did not I can't tell. Think of it! I meant to trade off the picture of my little cousin, who had been the dearest thing in the world to me. I was crazy, else I never would have done that. Won't you understand? It is not me you should hate. I wanted you. I—"

"I do not hate," she repeated, lowly, and finding it so hard to speak steadily under the feelings of her injury to him, of which he knew nothing—to hear him say he wanted her; to ask her forgiveness, when she felt so guilty—guilty!

Did he guess that she did not hate? He looked at her and smiled when she spoke. He would need to be several steps nearer the grave than he was to be untouched by the conscious flush of her young face as she answered him. He gave a little contented sigh, and lay back with closed eyes.

"You've made me talk myself into a fever to convince you," he complained; "but you have not yet said 'forgive.' You can be very hard-hearted."

She seemed to hear only the first part of his speech, for she arose and brought him an infusion of aromatic herbs, at which he laughed again.

"You are always the doctor, never the girl," he said. "No, I will not drink the tea. Sit and talk to me; that will be medicine enough."

"There is nothing to say," she repeated, quietly. "In the Indian lodges, people never learn to say many things, or talk much about little. It is only the white women who do that, and who laugh—laugh like the girl in your charm—the girl you say cousin; that is like sister?"

"Like?—yes, some like," and he smiled at her. "But I'll tell you, and then we'll never talk of it any more. We changed pictures—traded, you know; and that is sometimes a love sign with us, you understand. Well, I came west until my little girl would grow up; then I was to go back. We were to be married, and live in luck the rest of our lives. That's all over now, you see. I'll never go back now. Neil Dunbar can't, you know; he's dead. I don't know just who this is that's telling you Neil's story. You must find a name for him, and we'll both try and forget there ever was such a man; and if the authorities don't catch me, or if some of Clevents' friends don't get on my track, we'll find something better than these rock walls to live in, and we'll forget them, too."

"I don't want to forget. This has been a good home to me," she answered. "This, the old, old place where the outlaws hid. May be the outlaws loved it, too, for its shelter; and I—I will never forget."

"The outlaws? Tell me of them. I want a story of some sort, since you will tell me none of yourself; and to suit the pictures you make, you ought to be able to tell all sorts of dreamy, mysterious stories of the East."

She did not understand. The East was to her a place where the tenderfeet grew, and where the white men's mothers and fathers were. But though she knew nothing of that older East, she told the legend of the northern mountain, that had quite as much of the picturesque about it, and was quite as visionary.

"Only the old people tell of it now," she said. "It is all of so long ago, like the shadow of things that have been; and with every old one that dies, a little more is forgotten. Soon all will be dead, and strangers who hunt gold will wonder at the great gate cut in the mountain; no one will be left to say why it was cut there."

"For that you need a historian—no, a poet," he said, and then looked at her approvingly. "You have seemed almost one as you talk there. Who taught you to speak so beautifully?"

"Me? You are laughing at me."

"Indeed I am not. You seem like one of those guardian spirits of the mountain come to life to tell of their past, and to copy them, too, by saving another outlaw. Are you sure, now, you do not belong to that old race?"

"I am not sure," she answered, quietly. "You will laugh more, may be, when you hear, but even the oldest people say that Mestina was of the old king nation. It has always been said she was the last; and now—"

"And now you are. So *that* is how the title of princess was given to her ladyship. Well, don't pretend you can't tell stories. You have chased away troublesome memories from my brain, and given me something soothingly romantic to think of, though I shall stand in awe of your importance now, and will scarcely dare let you wait on me—you, a princess of the unnamed nation!"

"No," she objected; "the name means nothing now, not so much as *elite*, for I will work while you need me, and am content to be slave."

"To be mine?"

"To serve my master," she said, simply, and he smiled at her absolute refusal to be won to a more familiar attitude or speech.

Clearly, she was Indian in nature—though ready to serve, she could not quite forgive. But her devotion bridged over any estrangement; and after that day when he had told her of a one-time sweetheart that he had given up, as he had all other worldly things except herself—Élouise—and after she had broken her reserve, and told him of her youthful friend Henri, and then of the forgotten

race whose descendant people said she was—well, it all served to narrow the distance between them; and although she never voluntarily touched his hand, and although the dread was always with her that some chance would reveal that he was free to walk away if he chose, yet she held close in her guilty heart the joy of barring out the world from him for a little while longer; that it would be forever she dared not hope. In his strength he might learn the truth, and might turn from her, but he was yet, in his weakness, dependent only on her; and she owed him so great a debt.

Paying it, she worked through the early dawns and odorous dusks, doing the work she had seen the trappers do with wolves killed by poisons, curing the pelts for transportation when the number had reached the amount needed. From fish and small snared game she could get what was needed for mere living; but to leave and take a long trail money would be needed—and if he kept the wish to go to that south-land where the snow never fell? and if he kept the wish that she should go too? Well, she did not dare hope too much, but, nevertheless, set the traps and gathered the harvest that came from them, and but for her hurt to him and her lie to him, would have been utterly happy.

And her face shone fitfully joyous at times, in spite of the weight of her Manitou's symbol that had driven out her Christianity. When one is young it is not easy to close one's eyes to the blue sky or the star-shine, no matter how dark the clouds are that crouch along the horizon.

CHAPTER XII.

HIGH-LOW REFORMED.

WHEN the rather distinguished face of Mr. Clevents again responded to the smile of High-Low, it confronted several unlooked-for changes. A month had not elapsed since the night he had pocketed all the winnings, yet during it two ladies were reputed to have taken up lodgings within the gates of the city to be. Mr. Clevents said "Ah?" when informed of the addition by Antoine, and then added, "I thought you had as many as this hell-hole could support when I was here last time. Did my Indian ever show up again?"

And then, with scant notice of, and scant belief in, Antoine's asseverations that these ladies were "most surely another sort," Mr. Clevents continued his inquiries concerning the unsolved problem of Dunbar's disappearance. And others than Antoine answered; all the residents gathered in for the mail greeted the new-comer, and while they talked he eyed them with flattering attention, noting a certain "dressy" atmosphere about them that had not belonged there when he saw them last.

Clean shirts were noticeable; best boots were prominent, showing by their unscarred surface that they had not been degraded to work in the diggings that day. Neckties flaunted in the June air, and innovations that a month ago would have docked their wearers for the drinks were, to Mr. Clevents' wonder, noticed by no one but himself; and a couple entering the general store and saloon cast lingering glances down the road ere calling for their liquor.

"Is this prayer-meeting night?" he asked, mildly curious, and was looked at threateningly by one or two in consequence. But as Antoine was busy sorting the mail, and as Collins was distributing drinks, no one had time to answer. He saw Redney spelling over an old newspaper at the post-office corner of the counter, and sauntered over to him. He had rather liked the young fellow since that memorable night, in spite of the idea he had that Redney did not like him, not well enough to let him have that ticket, anyway.

"Good-evening," he said, civilly; "I was just going to ask for you. I had an idea that you might be able to tell me something about my Indian girl and her mother. They seem to have dropped off the face of the earth as completely as Dunbar."

"About," agreed Redney. "But I don't happen to have anything to tell you."

"Ah! Well, I've an interest in the matter, you know, since he was hurt over a game with me—a good fellow, too. I've a notion of starting on the hunt myself, but reckon it's too late."

No answer from Redney, who seemingly had no interest in the subject, and whose gaze wandered again to the paper.

"By the way," added the stranger, suddenly, "you are a subject for congratulation to-day, ain't you? I heard you had just been offered the place of boss of the portage and mail gang. That will bring more of an assured salary than digging on your own hook, won't it? Allow me to furnish the drinks for the occasion."

"Not for me, thank you. I don't drink."

"With *me*, you mean?"

"I don't know that I'd drink with you quicker than with another man, even if I did drink," answered the young fellow, coolly; "but I don't like the stuff, and don't drink it with anyone."

Mr. Clevents' eyes traveled over the boyish form and face speculatively, and then laughed—a something sufficiently rare to be surprising in him, and changed the cool, tired-looking face into one much more pleasing.

“I don't know but what I like that speech of yours almost as much as I did your refusal to let me have that ticket, young fellow,” he said, frankly, “and I like your pluck as well as both; taking them all together, they map you out square. Will you shake?”

So taken back was Redney by the words that, in stupid surprise, he did meet the other man's hand with his, though not saying a word.

“I saw some of the ideas you had,” went on Mr. Clevents, “especially about the girl; but you were wrong. I've a daughter of my own near that girl's age; something of a likeness seemed to strike me as I got a square look at this one's face that night. My little girl is half Spanish, and if I'd won the young squaw, she would have been posted right down to Santa Barbara, and had a home where my own girl has one. That looked to me a better deal for her than to belong to any man I saw in this shebang. There! I don't often trouble myself to explain things, but I didn't like the thoughts you had.”

“How did you know I had them?”

“Not from your conversation, anyway,” acknowledged the older man. “But I was rather glad when I heard you had been picked for the canoe-line; it's a responsible thing to be offered a boy, but I suppose the fact that you let whisky alone is one reason you're elected.”

“Well, they did say something of that sort,” he answered, with a conscious flush at the self-praise in the admission. “But I've an idea my partner, Ewing, spoke to Raeforth for me. Ewing is in Dunbar's place now.”

“Raeforth? Oh, yes. He's been here since I've been

gone. Well, has stock in the Little Hell had a boom in consequence?"

Not getting an answer, he looked up to meet the threatening glance of Redney and the glowering eyes of some of the other gentry, while close to his elbow a girlish contralto said:

"I beg your pardon, but will you please move a little?"

And suddenly straightening from the position that had barred all access to the "post-office," he faced about and met a vision to which he lifted his hat with rather more grace than any of the hatless inhabitants of the room; for as he stepped back he came in range of all masculine eligible High-Low with a smirk on its face and its whisky forgotten.

The vision was not alone. There were two of them; one at the door, with a white mite of babyhood in her arms, and an expression of disapproval and consternation on her face, and Redney, seeing it, walked straight to her.

"I had no idea she meant to go in there *alone*," she gasped; "but she was gone before I could stop her. What would her uncle say?"

"You both went in the other day with Milt," said Redney, crossly.

"Oh, but that was different. He told them beforehand, and they were looking for us—and all," explained Mrs. Ewing, bravely; "but to-day—"

Clevents was near enough to hear the words, and to bow again, as the owner of the contralto passed out with her letters, after nodding graciously to several of the smirking ones; and as the last flutter of skirts disappeared, as if wafted away on the long breath of the man who had glared at him, Mr. Clevents understood that *the* event of the day had just occurred, and also understood the change in dress and deportment that had puzzled him before.

But part of the polite cloak was dropped as Redney re-entered and glanced at the gambler.

"I just came back to mention something before I forget it," he said, darkly, "and this is what it is: There's ladies in this here settlement now, and Raeforth's mine is named after one of them, and her name ain't Little Hell, either! So, not wanting to give offense, but it's been decided that nicknames for that mine don't go down with this camp any longer."

"That's the talk!" "Them's my sentiments, gentlemen!" "D——d if Redney can't find the right words, and we're back of him!" were several of the expressions that astonished the stranger, who looked from one to the other with his slight, cool smile.

"So? Well, a change seems to have fallen over the spirit of yoor dreams since I struck the town last, and a man might be excusable, I think, for using the name by which the mine was known not a month ago; and I've heard half of you using it yourselves."

None of the party denied that; even Redney nodded assent in the cause of truth.

"But we've reformed," explained Collins, "and whoever locates here has to reform with us, unless he's a godly product when he strikes camp. It's all out o' respect for the ladies, you know."

"And I'm with you, so you can't pick a quarrel on that question," said Clevents to Redney; "only it's apt to knock anyone dizzy when a reform like that strikes one unprepared. Drink?"

And over the glasses he heard the story of High-Low's reformation, all because of two pretty young women and a baby. He also heard of the attempts made to obliterate, or rather veil, the older feminine occupancy, and the failure thereof. Just one concession had been secured from

them, and that was no loafing at Antoine's, no drinks handed out to women over the bar; for, after the visit of the new divinities on a mail-day, some rule had to be laid down by these modern knights, even if they had to boycott Antoine to get his vote. But from the numberless flasks that were carried as bribes down the road, it is safe to say that Antoine's purse suffered little from the change.

So with explanations and polite assurances came harmony, and the new-comer absorbed considerable of it in quiet appreciation of High-Low's reformation, a reform, however, that affected neither liquid consolation nor games of chance.

But Clevents did not play. To the banter of some he replied that he had not yet got the stake for his last game there, and was waiting for it. But he stopped Redney, as he was leaving, and asked when he was to start for Farwell.

"Early in the morning; before you're out, I reckon."

"Well, I just thought I'd mention that I've some friends down there who might be of use if you want anything; so, if you do, young fellow, sing your little song!"

"I'll be back in a week," answered Redney, in spite of himself kindly impressed by the persistent courtesy of the man. "I'm not likely to need anything in that time; but obliged to you, just the same."

"Well, good luck to you!"

"Same to you," returned the other, mechanically, and then, as he walked thoughtfully up the hill, took himself to account for the speech.

"If he has a notion of trailing Élouise or that other duffer, I don't know as I do wish him luck, either. It's all a cursed tangle, anyway. Sometimes I feel as if I've got to tell the truth to her, or else skip the country; then again, I've a notion that if she cared such a heap about him she

wouldn't be forever laughing, and satisfied with other folks. Élouise wouldn't be, not much. But then Élouise is a fool. She'd rather keep him up there a gawky idiot, and work for him like a slave, sooner than let his relations, that have the right, take care of him. That's just a fool woman; and she ain't so much of a woman as the other girl, either, not in years, though I reckon Indian blood ages folks—girls, anyway."

He had duly conferred with the "fool woman" about his weekly trip from High-Low, and the possible necessity of her going herself for provisions if any quick need should arise.

"And you are safe enough, too," he insisted. "No one will trouble or follow you, for no one has an idea but what you have gone with the princess, or back to some of the tribe; and if any one bothers you, just tell me when I get back, that's all."

He had at last persuaded her that no trace of suspicion regarding Dunbar's disappearance led to her, and that when High-Low sobered up no one had much to say against her use of the knife, except that they were sorry it happened to be Dunbar.

"And it's a heap better for you to walk right in there and let anyone see you that wants to than for you to run chances of having some one spy you accidental, and think you're layin' low around here. They'll drop to it then that you have a good reason. Catch on?"

She understood, and saw the wisdom of his plan.

"Your head thinks well for me," she said, gratefully, "though sometimes it makes you a heap cross—much; or may be it is the other, the white one of whom you speak no more—she who is proud, and angers you. Is it that? and does it make you glad to go?"

"Now where do you get your notions, Élouise?" he demanded; "she ain't bothering me any."

"Oh!" and the girl's face had a fleeting smile of the care-free, mischievous days when Redney had seen her first. "But since she is so ugly, I thought—"

"Ugly?"

"Yes; the little Mrs.—Mrs. Freshy, the one with the crooked nose—so you said. You forget?"

"Oh, let up on the noses, can't you? I guess she's about as much for looks as that crazy coyote you've got corraled up there in the ledge;" and then, relenting somewhat, he added, more kindly: "Is he hard to take care of? I mean, does he still see things that ain't there?"

"Never now; but the fever comes back many days," she answered, sadly; "when it comes no more, then he will get strong."

"And then he wants to cut the diggin's, does he? Well, I may be owner of a portage outfit by that time, and can give him a lift. Say, when are you to break ice by showing at the camp?"

"May be I will go now, this night, while you are yet there," she said, suddenly; "it might be better if you were there."

"Sure," he assented; "you come."

And after he exchanged words with Clevents, and turned toward the home path, he scanned road and clearing in every direction for some sign that she had kept the half promise, but nowhere could he see her; and with a mighty wish that the tangled lines suddenly centered in High-Low would proceed to untangle, and would let him out of the loops, he proceeded up the slope to the house, where the family of Ewing had prepared a sort of impromptu feast in honor of their one member whom Miss Della called the captain since the word of his appointment had come.

It was Miss Della herself, with the heir of the Ewings in her arms, who met him at the top of the slope, where she

had been watching the flickering glow of the sun flame and fade until only the warm ashes lay banked up against the western sky.

"Have you forgotten that Mrs. Ewing told you to come straight home?" she asked. "She sent baby and me out to whistle for you, but as whistlers we are failures."

"I had to stop and talk with some fellows, or else bring them along, and I allowed you had seen as many as you wanted for one evening," he remarked, with boyish sulkiness, at which she laughed.

"Mrs. Ewing said she knew you were cross because we stopped there. I declare, you are too ridiculous, though it is very good of you to care at all. But I see nothing wrong about the post-office; the men were very civil."

"For once," he agreed.

"Well," she said, after a little deliberation, "it may be because no lady has ever gone there that they have grown rough. Now, no place has a right to be such that a lady can not enter if she choose, and I am going to educate the High-Lowites to that idea."

"How?"

"Why, by going at all times and seasons," she laughed, "and keeping them perpetually on their good behavior."

"No, you won't," he contradicted; and she laughed again at his angry interest.

"Oh, but I will! So you may look for me at the door when you come up on that new outfit."

"If you don't take that back I'll not move an inch toward Farwell, or run the boats, either."

"You—" she began, in amazement.

"I've said it," he returned, briefly, without looking at her. But she looked at him, and the set, boyish face, that was more colorless than usual, checked her own laughter, in fact sent a little conscious flush over her own cheeks,

and an embarrassed silence fell over them, broken only, as they neared the house, by her saying:

"You should have known I was only jesting. I will never go in there alone again—of course not."

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. CLEVENTS TAKES NOTES.

IT was by merest chance that Mr. Clevents should have indulged in a saunter down the stage-road directly after breakfast—a breakfast prepared by Antoine, and by no means irreproachable. And his guest, while walking, was inwardly debating the advisability of bringing up a Chinaman he knew and locating a cook-house, with the idea of feeding High-Low—for a consideration.

In fact, Mr. Clevents did several things besides play a scientific game. Few of the floating population of the mining country noticed more closely than he did the ebb and flow of prosperity and the signs that prophesied that state. And High-Low, though but in its infancy, seemed promising enough to come back to. Somebody would come in there with a boom some day and locate a gambling-house, and Mr. Clevents had an idea of forestalling any such ambitious one. Some men he knew had bought up shares in the "Dell" mine, and enough promising stuff had been found in it to warrant more extensive operations. Mr. Raeforth had perceived that fact, had been advised of it by Dunbar for months past, and, when once he took time to give it his personal attention, he immediately took steps to

give it a show, if it had metal in it worth showing. Unlimited supplies for energetic work had been secured at Farwell, also other laborers who were to follow; and wherever a corporation made a show of that sort, Clevents knew that the independent workers were not long in following, and securing their own little claims as near the town as possible. And so Mr. Clevents came ahead of the boom, and was somewhat surprised to find that a couple of ladies had arrived ahead of him.

He had not yet spoken to them, as their abode was somewhat removed from the town proper—or improper; but he had met Ewing, and got on friendly footing with him easier than with Ewing's partner.

He smiled to himself as he thought of the partner's uncompromising attitude and boyish cheek. He rather liked it, just as he had liked the youthfulness in that other part Indian thing who had used the knife so ruthlessly.

"If there were any process by which one could keep them always young, they would make a good-looking pair," he decided; "but the squaws get so infernally ugly as they get old. Five years from now she'll be a good deal of a beast, I suppose, and he'll be a quarrelsome tough, with some of his fine features battered up by fights."

He stopped and looked down at the straggly settlement with something of disgust on his face. Perhaps, remembering the associations of it and like places, he was wondering how so many men as do happened to emerge from such surroundings and walk again with the luckier children of the earth.

And yet it all looked so much a picture of peace and the atmosphere surrounding it so entirely sylvan—the tiny houses of new spruce, touched here and there with the green of mosses, and farther along the road the white tents of those who had no time for building, and, high above, the

green-draped rise of the range, with the western slope yet vaguely tender in tone from the mists of the morning.

"Looks like a camp-meeting site," he thought, grimly. "A camp-meeting, without the disturbing commotion a sky-pilot stirs up later in the day, looks better in the morning; and I wonder if the worms of earth down there were weighed in the godly scales of civilization which element would get the heft of the crowns and wings—the degraded half-breeds, or the white men who have made them what they are?"

Mr. Clevents happened to be able to view this moral question from an entirely impersonal standpoint, as half-breeds had never appealed to his rather fastidious tastes, and those of the mixed blood and many-tinted tendencies who dwelt in the sacred-looking valley seemed to his mind a little nearer the brotherhood of Beelzebub than the usual hordes.

Except, of course, the two young people who had been fortunate enough to impress him differently; and it was hard to realize that they belonged to the scrubs, though both wore more of the Indian dress than half the full-blooded reds, and neither seemed to care about admitting relationship with their more noble white ancestry. It may have been that very isolation of the two from any bonds of family that moved the gambler to an impulse of interest in them, that and their youth and the way they had managed to keep clear of the moral disease that was bred in the air about them. He had in his mind an ideal ranch down near the Santa Clara Range on which he intended locating some day, and forever after be counted among the landmarks of respectability; and he had an idea that it would be a good place for those two young nomads, if they could be tempted away from the more hazardous life of the hills. In fact, Mr. Clevents grew amusingly philanthropic in his idleness—for there was no chance of getting up a game at that early hour of the day.

It was the day the new portage gang was to come in. He remembered that, because the present object of his existence was simply to wait for some letters he expected on it. He was wondering how the young cub would like his new work, when he heard a body pressing through the thick undergrowth near, and then he saw the dark eyes and intense face of the "other cub" close beside him.

She looked startled, but made no attempt to avoid him, and looked at him without speaking as she stepped into the road. But he saw her hand raised quickly to her bosom. He had seen a knife flash from that covert once, and smiled at her thoughts, which he understood.

"Never mind that," he suggested, and reached out his hand to her. "When you want to come to me, my girl, I'll take care of you, otherwise you belong to yourself."

She did not touch his hand, but looked embarrassed at his words. They were rather kindly, even pitiful, for he noticed that her face was more tired, her garments more torn and shabby, than when he had seen her last, and even then they were poor.

"Well, you've had a hard time of it, wherever you've been tramping," he decided. "You look all broke up."

"He that digs his food from the mountain can not look fine," she answered. "But I ask nothing of the whites."

"You say that as if you were not almost white yourself, you poor young outcast," he said, looking at her more deliberately than he had ever done before, and recognizing some elusive change from the black-eyed young creature of rage who had made the sensation of a night at High-Low. "Where have you been? where are you bound for?"

"To the camp—Antoine's," she answered, and then added doubtfully, "The minds there are not against me because—"

"Because you knifed Dunbar?" he added, easily. "Well, no. Law and order are neglected to a distressing degree

up here, so there is nothing on the dockets against you. It might have been different if it had been me you used the knife on, as I couldn't have been spared. By the way, Élouise, daughter of La Mestina, why wasn't it me you tried to do for instead of Neil Dunbar? He was much the best fellow of the two."

"Yes," she agreed in all seriousness, and moved as if to pass him; but he turned too, with an amused grimace at her frankness.

"Reckon I'll go along," he remarked. "I may not be a winner of any moral medals or that sort of thing, but might serve as an escort along the boulevards of High-Low, supposing some energetic Christian should want to waylay you with Sabbath-school questions."

She did not answer, not understanding very well his manner of speech, but feeling from his tone that his meaning was kind; and then it might have been a relief to learn that there was really never a one to contest her chosen master's right to her. Anyway, she walked beside him, glancing stealthily every now and then into the cool, nonchalant face of the man, and seeing by the morning light that he was not so youthful as she had thought that night at Antoine's. The fact, however, gave her no added confidence in him. The worst of the white men she had ever seen were the older ones, and some who were very wicked could speak gently as this one.

"Have you brought your mother, the princess, back with you?" he queried, not thinking but what they were together.

But the girl raised her hand with a little un-Indian gesture of protest.

"*Nah!* there is no mother to me. I claim no people; none."

"Oh! so you've got that sort of spunk, have you?"

Good enough! And now look here, my girl, I'm going to talk to you like a Dutch uncle, or any other patriarch. How would you like to live in a good home, where you wouldn't need to dig your feed from the mountains; where you could learn in schools like white girls; have good clothes all your life, and no one to boss you but a little girl, who is kind as an angel to everyone? What do you say?"

"I, Élouise, go to no man's house," she answered, curtly; "I want only to be let alone."

In her thoughts were memories of other Indian girls and women whom she had seen in white men's houses. Some lived now in the cabins of High-Low. All of the life the girl had seen she feared.

"What have you been drinking, Élouise?" he asked, impatiently. "Can't you understand what I mean? It's a chum for a little white girl I want, not one for myself."

She shook her head.

"No! no white woman; the ice and the wolves are better. If I live, well; if I starve, there is room on the mountains. I will fall across no man's path."

"Someone told me you had a friend in a half-breed priest of this country," he said, suddenly; "what is his name?"

"Brother Henri? Oh, he is away over there," and she pointed back over the mountains to the west. "Yes, he was good; but he will not care now, may be. I am out of the church. I have been evil in heart," and her head bent humbly in the confession.

He thought she meant the hurt to Dunbar.

"Well, I wouldn't let go my pew in church on that account," he said, cheerfully. "We're a long time dead, young lady, and while we have our stop-over checks for a picnic on earth, don't spoil your day's sport by sighs or

snivels. Understand? And if you've any friends to ask advice of, just tell them I've offered you a healthy home, when you want to strike the trail to it. Where do you live, anyway?"

"*Konaway kah*" (everywhere), she answered, curtly, and not another word could he get from her in *King George wau-wau* (English talk). She would reply when he addressed her, but the replies were in Chinook, which he might understand if he could, and he generally couldn't. And to his amusement and impatience Élouise would countenance questioning no further.

But he nevertheless walked nonchalantly beside her along the road, seeming not to notice the curiosity of the inhabitants. All recognized the Indian girl, and seeing her thus in company with the man who had won her, High-Low grinned a little, and formed conclusions in keeping with its general tendencies.

But her escort might have had a real princess royal in charge from the superior manner by which he ignored the ordinary public.

"Give her some breakfast to begin with, Antoine," he suggested, as the girl halted at the plank counter; "she looks as though she needed a bracer, and not a bottled one, either."

Élouise shook her head.

"But it is the bottle I want filled," she said, and laid the flask Redney had given her on the bar. Antoine picked it up and looked at it.

"Ah! who is it for that you carry the drink?" he asked, teasingly; "not La Mestina—this never hold enough. This bottle did come from me, yes; but not to you. Some trapper lover, is it? Ah! yes, yes. But pick some other man's house to use the knife in when his time comes. Promise, and I fill the flask and charge you never anything. It is so; promise."

She hesitated. The few little coins might mean so much, yet the smiling Antoine had never been liked much by her, and to take his favors—

"No, she won't promise," interrupted Mr. Clevents. "Under the same provocation she is liable to cut a half-dozen instead of one. Give her what she wants; I'm responsible this morning."

"Most sure. I joke with the child, that is all. So many years have I been acquaint with her—yes, even when the hunters did carry her, and Henri did lead her—her, the 'little eagle,' they did call her then, and it is not so long ago. No, Élouise is yet the child, though not the friendly child—no, no. She forgets her friends."

"You are one man's friend, that is all," she answered.

"Oh! you say so? and the man?"

"Antoine."

She did not care that a couple of miners who had lounged in were laughing, to the chagrin of the courteous Frenchman. She had so many memories of him when he was not courteous, when she, a half-starved little thing, had been driven from the door where she had watched his guests eat. She knew it was but to stand well in the graces of a good customer that he was so kind now, and though she could ill afford to win enemies, her irritation prompted the curt speech.

"Hello! it's the little squaw," and one of the men, catching sight of her face, came forward. "She's wanted at the court-house, ain't she?"

He only said it to scare the girl a little; but again Clevents stood between her and the words of the others by saying:

"Well, when Dunbar comes back and makes a charge will be time enough to settle that, if it needs any settling; so just let the young one alone, can't you? Sit down, you

young eagle, or raven, or whatever it was they named you—a raven, I guess, as you are so thin; and Elijah seems to have given you the go-by.”

He himself filled a plate with the least repelling portions of the breakfast remains and offered it to her. She drew back, looking at him curiously. He seemed to her unlike any of the white men she ever had seen, and his manner that morning had been a puzzle. She had hated him that night of the gambling, yet he surely was trying to be kind.

“Eat, so I can know you have no grudge against me,” he said; “I don’t like to have the grudge of a woman.”

“The grudge?” she asked, not understanding; and the vivacious Antoine interpreted.

“The grudge; yes, the *pittuck mesahchie* (wicked thoughts)—you see? Now you must show to the stranger that you are not his enemy. You only empty the dish—it is easy—and no more grudge is thought.”

She turned curtly from the interpreter and took the plate.

“*Mahsie*,” she said, quietly; and as Clevents happened to understand the Indian word of thanks, he knew she was at least reachable by assured kindness, though her words were brief. And she would speak no more English, possibly because of the other two men who were looking at her so. She was growing afraid of men’s eyes and ears. Glances unnoticed by her so short a time before, now seemed full of significance, and a sort of terror suddenly took possession of her, lest any suspicion might detain her, or cause trouble and loss of time in her return to her hiding-place.

The courage needed for going back to High-Low did not seem to her great. It had to be done, that was all. Of the personal danger she thought not at all. But the words of the miner, and the curious glances she met, filled her with tremulous fear; a fear not of harm to herself, but of following feet, and of eyes that might find her retreat.

She arose quickly at the thought and reached for the little flask, the paper of crackers, and the bit of quinine that had formed one of the strongest reasons for her trip to the store.

"Some of your people sick?" asked Clevents, noting that purchase; but she did not answer, only held out her hand to Antoine, offering the few little coins in payment. And the gambler, with a grunt of impatience, laid his hand over hers, closing her fingers on the money, and handing a dollar to Antoine instead.

"I stand treat this morning," he reminded her; "put your wealth in your pocket, Élouise. And now will you tell me where you are going?"

She shook her head.

"Nor when you come back?"

She hesitated at that, and then, thinking to stay pursuit if any was thought of, she answered in English that the others might hear.

"May be soon, few days; may be not. You see me when I come."

And, with a look and gesture of farewell, she passed him quickly and walked swiftly along the road, back over the way she had come. There was a much nearer way past the cabin of Ewing, but it was a way not to be taken under the eyes of half High-Low.

Once she turned around and saw the gambler standing in front of Antoine's and looking after her; the sight hastened her steps and made her indifferent to the eyes of the others whose doors she passed. Had she noticed carefully, she would have seen that his watching lasted only until she had passed those doors.

"Poor little devil!" he thought, as he saw her walk through the territory that someone should have the right to shield her from knowledge of. "Poor little stubborn imp! But what can a gentleman do?"

Then he heard Antoine decide that the girl was crazy. It was the only way to explain her late fierceness and sullen ingratitude.

"Think! not one little woman's look of thanks for that good gentleman's generosity to her," and the speaker knew well that the "good gentleman" was yet within hearing. "But it is the head is wrong; yes, that is sure, and there is no wonder in that. The holy church says that the sins of the parents must be answered for by the children. Yes; and the mother of this one did spit upon the cross, and scratched the good father who made offer of it to her. Yes, she did that long ago, and turned back to the Indian faith that dances in pride among serpents. That day is yet counted a day of disgrace among the tribe, for that day she was banished, she and her blood. Yes, that is the story they tell; and what is there to be expected of the child of such a mother—struck the father till the prints of her nails were left in the sanctified flesh! And the child was always more heathen than Christian; and now she turns strange in her head, and looks fierce as a tiger's whelp that has just smelled blood, and will not even tell who is the man she lives with."

"Here! here! ain't you coming it rather strong, my Christian friend?" asked the gambler, who had listened to the bit of history Antoine was chattering as he washed the breakfast-pans and whisky-glasses. "Who has mentioned a man as being with her?"

"But what child that is a girl would live alone in these mountains?" asked his host in return. "No, not even the oldest squaws would do that. This one once before went away like that—yes, and because she was so young all were afraid she was eaten by the wild things; but no," and his smile was not a charitable one, "nothing she feared had troubled her, though we never learned who it

was kept her company. And then Brother Henri—our priest, you know—he happens here after a week had gone by. All tell to him that the child Élouise is lost—is, may be, food for the beasts; and what does he do? He but asks some little questions, and departs quickly, and when the night come Priest Henri comes too—with Élouise. He had found her, though none knows where, nor with whom. That is but a year ago, and she promised then to be wicked no more—promised the priest; but that is a year, and the priest is beyond the range, where the people are dying like cattle with a strange fever. So it is, you see, whoever she went with before has come back, and they hide together somewhere in the forest. It is as one might expect from old Mestina's child."

Clevents again felt that wave of disgust at the evidence that not even the child he had thought well of was above suspicion.

"And has this man, this priest, any real control over her when he is here?" he asked at last, after the others had changed the conversation, and looked up puzzled when he spoke.

"Gone on yer little squaw yourself, ain't ye?" asked one of the miners good-humoredly; but Antoine again came forward with his ever-ready knowledge of things.

"What—Brother Henri? Oh, to be sure; when La Mestina could do nothing with the whip, a word from him would control Élouise—always, even before he was of the priests. For he lived with the tribe before the school days. He went with the hunters, and knew every peak and every stream. Yes, it is so; and it was he who climbed once to the nest of an eagle and brought down the squaw Élouise, when she was but a babe. Ah, the chiefs praised him for that; it was very brave, they said, for when he started he did not think to return alive. But it was he who had carried the

child away from the camp, so his was the blame; he must find her or else never return himself to the tribe. So he thought, and so he saved her, crippling the mother-bird and bearing from her nest the child. It was great for a boy to do—so they said; and the child was Henri's young eagle after that. He was always the master—she would always obey, though for no one else, no, not one; and so it has always been. He brought her back from her hiding-place last year. He would make her return now if he was here. Yes; surely. I knew him well, and his father before him. His father was a *voyageur* of the old company. Yes, a worthy soul; married in holy church to the squaw he picked. She died so soon he had never time to get tired of her, and to the last day he did praise his Belle Marie; and the boy he was proud of—ah, much! And the boy himself kept pride; yes, though a priest; proud though he goes hungry many a day in the winter-time over there among the “scrub reds”—so the hunters call them. But he is most devotional, yes. I know, you see, when he was but small—”

But the restless stranger again left the interesting Antoine to the other miners and betook himself to the thoroughfare. The veils of mist were wrapping themselves into fleecy clouds and sailing away on the high seas of air over the ranges. Fair nature had grown several degrees less fair in the eyes of the gambling humanitarian. He wished mightily that the portage gang would arrive, and the stagnation of High-Low give place to enterprise.

Of course the mere telling of so usual a story as Antoine's was a trifling thing in that region. Why should not the young Indian have a lover? Other girls had—other squaws. Yet he felt angered and indignant at the idea. He wanted to follow, and hear her say it was not true, but did not know the direction she had taken.

He did, however, walk in her tracks until he came where

the trail left the "boulevard" and crept up mountainward; and a little straggling section of it crept down to Cascade Creek, and the waters of the cascade were engulfed a little below by the alluring swiftness of the great river and carried in triumph to the oceans.

And it was along the lines of the river the new conveyors were to come; and the stranger, bored and impatient, followed its downward race aimlessly, not guessing that the whispering waters could have led him upward straight to the nest of the wild child whose abode was just then the one interesting puzzle of the place to him—that and the financial future of High-Low.

But a man must be very deeply engaged in financial problems—especially in the north Selkirk country—if the soft laughter of womankind fails to attract his attention, and the sound of it floating up the stream was so girlish, so charming a note in the music of the landscape; and Mr. Clevents was just susceptible enough to sweet sounds to be drawn down the stream by them, and with a pretty clear idea that the voice must belong to the girl High-Low had reformed for.

It did. She and Joseph Dyce Ewing and Jo Dyce's mamma were trying to navigate a wide, still pool of the cascade by means of a dug-out and one paddle. That is, Miss Della was doing the navigating, and Mrs. Ewing and the baby were watching her from a safe nook on the shore, and all of them laughing at the stubborn circles the dug-out persisted in describing.

"I'm sure Chief Simon did not have to work so hard as this," panted the amateur canoeist, "and he moved in a beautiful straight line, while this vessel seems to be going around on a pivot."

"May be you are in the clutches of some marine monster," laughed Mrs. Ewing. "It's the first time I ever saw you look helpless and funny."

"Well, I don't feel funny," declared the girl. "Just stop laughing and look at the thing; right around in a circle. I suppose I'll have to go whirling on down to Farwell like this. I can't even get the bewitched thing in to shore."

And then Mrs. Ewing almost screamed as Mr. Clevents spoke just back of her, advising the captain of the canoe to ship her paddle for a moment, and see what the dug-out would do if left to itself.

The thing it did was to swing itself around once more and take lodging in the roots of a tree that had been swept from its moorings by some freshet; and from that point of vantage Miss Della met again the eyes that had drifted past her in the dark of the narrows.

"This is all very well, so far as it goes," she agreed, "but I can't see that I'm making much headway."

"If you will accept me as pilot—"

"I don't know," she deliberated. "There is a heartless creature on the shore there who has been jubilant over my danger; now if you could only inveigle her on board, and make her share the delights of canoeing, as a penance—"

But Mrs. Ewing retreated at the suggestion.

"I would not risk my life on one of those logs for the world," she declared; "and if you, sir, can only get her on dry land once more I'll manage to keep her here if I have to use ropes."

And as the stranger smiled at her vehemence, Mrs. Ewing decided that the smile made him almost handsome; and the way in which he drifted a log down to the submerged roots and made a bridge from it to the shore won her admiration entirely. It really made the little episode seem like a real adventure; and Miss Della was a pretty picture of a maid forlorn as she was towed meekly along the log in her tipsy dug-out, a failure as a canoeist.

"I had an idea it was a trade, but it is an art," she complained, "and I am not one of the artists. One has to be

born to it, I suppose, just as that royal Simon was, and your boatman who took your canoe like an arrow down the narrows that evening."

"Then you remember me? That is something unlooked for."

"I remember your face now quite well," said Mrs. Ewing, with a belated idea of the conventional. "We met too few travelers to forget any; and I think my husband knows you. I am Mrs. Ewing."

"And this the future governor-general of High-Low," added the girl, introducing Jo Dyce, who blinked knowingly from one to the other, and clinging to Mr. Clevents' offered finger cemented at once an acquaintance entertaining on both sides.

"Oh, did you come down that path?" asked Miss Rae-forth, with sudden remembrance, pointing up where the mountain trail led. "We saw a picture up there a little while ago and are curious about it."

"Yes, a pretty girl in Indian dress, who fairly ran up that cliff," said Mrs. Ewing, "and halted there, looking back as if someone were following; but no one seemed to be, and then she ran on, never seeing us along the shore in the bushes. She was so pretty. I have seen no girls about here who look like her."

Mr. Clevents favored her with a close glance of scrutiny. How much did she know? Did either of them know of the Indian girl's history? He hesitated thoughtfully, and was released from the dilemma by Miss Rae-forth remarking:

"I *think* she is the one called Élouise, a daughter of a legendary and drunken princess, of whom we hear rumors. I thought you might be able to decide the question."

"You are right," agreed Mr. Clevents, with a sudden return of memory. "That is just who it is. I noticed her in camp this morning; but she is too wild for the settlements, and has gone back to the hills, I suppose."

"Mr. Redney told me of her and of her interesting mamma, and I should like to see her within speaking distance, but have so far failed."

Mr. Clevents noticed that Mrs. Ewing gave him a quick little appealing glance as the girl Élouise was mentioned. He felt ashamed, and instinctively raised his hat in acknowledgment of her trust, and wished he had never seen the perplexing little half-breed. He was sure from Mrs. Ewing's conscious manner that she had heard of that troublesome game of chance at Antoine's, just as he was certain from Miss Raeforth's outspoken interest that she had not.

"Oh, yes, she's an independent oddity up here; more like a boy than a girl, only the boys won't work as a general thing, and this one does—makes moccasins and all sorts of beaded stuff, and sells them at the trading-posts."

"Then I, for one, intend to invest in a complete outfit of beaded deer-skin," declared the girl; "and I shall endeavor to see her the next time she comes to the settlement."

"But that is most indefinite," explained Mr. Clevents, as he finished his work of dragging the dug-out up on shore for the next canoeist to wrestle with. "Her visits to High-Low are far between, and where she camps no one knows; civilization knows little about her."

"Just the reason she arouses my interest," said Miss Raeforth. "She must be an original to live alone in the wildness of these mountains. Why, it is appalling to think of!—among wild beasts and serpents and occasional outlaws of humanity."

"Oh; there are few of those up here," returned Mr. Clevents. "We may be outcasts from the rest of the world, but so long as we are alive we are accepted citizens in this territory. When we get too bad to live, they make angels

of us, with the aid of a rope; so, you see, the imperfect among us are not allowed to live long."

"Of course that tends toward giving us an exalted idea of those yet in the flesh," laughed the girl; "but, say what you will, we have seen some specimens very much alive who looked more impish than angelic."

"Notably your delirium tremens character," said Mrs. Ewing, and Mr. Clevents looked his inquiry. "We don't quite know who was delirious in this case," she continued, teasingly. "It may have been Miss Raeforth instead of the individual she thought she saw on the sacred corner of Thunder Mountain. She has only to-day divulged to me the extent of her imaginings up there."

"On a promise that my audience would abstain from ridicule or gossip of the adventure," interpolated the accused; "and this is how she keeps her word."

"Well, really, I don't see your reason for secrecy in the matter, even if you did stumble on some unknown up there," said Mrs. Ewing, in defense of her gossiping.

"*If* I saw him! And, so please you, I had not a reason in the world against proclaiming the fact; the reason, if there were any, was Mr. Redney's."

Mr. Clevents suddenly picked up his ears. "Was your unknown specimen a chum of Redney's?"

"Redney could not say, as the apparition was only visible to my own eyes. Oh, it was only a drunken man, I suppose, sleeping in the sun up there near the summit. I only got a glimpse of him, and when I sent our guide back he had vanished. To save the nerves of the others, we agreed not to mention it; and now this doubting Thomasa does not believe I had that adventure at all. She'll be trying to lessen the importance of my canoe adventure next thing."

"If so, call on me," he said, with a shade of flattering

seriousness back of his jesting words; "the importance of it will be remembered for the rest my vacation on this globe—its importance to me."

The two ladies smiled a little. They both rather liked him; he could say such common things with such an uncommon air, while compared with the average citizen of High-Low, he shone forth as a gem of purest ray serene, and the romanticism of their first meeting still clung with a little air of mystery about him. He had been another shadowy problem of the Selkirks for the girl to guess at; an attractive one, too, and, to her delight, as much interested in the complex character of the country as herself, lending a most respectful ear to her tale of the day on Thunder Mountain and the legendary history she had gathered from Redney. Not even a dubious smile touched his lips as she described the bearded apparition that haunted the sacred highlands, and after Mrs. Ewing's skepticisms, his belief was a balm to her feelings; and Mr. Clevents, gambler, prospector, and gentleman of leisure, found himself walking home with two of the most thorough ladies he had been on speaking terms with, and was treated with decided graciousness by the prettiest, most bewitching little girl he had known in the whole course of his life. But all the charm of his unusual luck did not deter him from making mental notes—notes he hoped to use for the saving of the girl so unlike this childish beauty—for the girl who lived somewhere among the phantoms of the walled-in highlands.

CHAPTER XIV.

HER MOTHER'S STORY.

AND up there, with the phantoms of her past people about her, the young squaw was growing into the most capricious, though devoted, of guardians. As Dunbar grew stronger, she grew more boyish, more distant and defiant, trying to gather up scattered bits of pride, that always fled from her at a note of pain in his voice, or the sight of feeble, dragging steps with which he followed her at times to the fishing-place.

"You are like several different people," he complained, "yet not like any woman, Élouise. You are as changeable as an Indian witch. Are you one?"

She smiled, for there were notes of content in his speech despite his words, and his content meant all of happiness to her.

"No witch; just Élouise. The change is in your eyes. I am the same, while you grow stronger. The sickness will soon be gone."

"And then?"

Moodiness like a cloud of April fell over her face, but she said:

"There are already many moccasins made for the post; when Redney comes again he will take them. Then there will be dollars for you."

"And then we will say good-by to this," and he pointed to the refuge that had been also a prison. But she only looked at him sadly; he seemed so glad at the thought of going.

"May be, may be not," she answered at last. "The mountain is the best home for the Indian."

"But you are not even half Indian," he protested. "Do you dislike so much the white blood in you?"

"Yes," she said, "it is true. I have never liked well the white people."

"Oh!" and he looked at her with the soft protest in eyes and voice. "Then why have you liked me well enough to hide me and nurse me?"

"I know not," she said, lowly; but the slow red crept up to her brow, and he, seeing it, smiled and reached his hand toward her.

"Yet you will not come near," he complained, as if her blush had been an audible avowal of affection. "You make me miserable; don't you see that? You might better have let me die than to never forgive me. Your reproach hurts me, for your silence is reproach. Are you going to hurt me always?"

Her troubled, pained gaze made him drop his own eyes; it disconcerted him with a wistfulness, a devotion so beyond him, though she could only repeat, confusedly, "I know not."

And she spoke truly—she knew not. The pain and the pleasure dealt her by his words were as shrouded meanings from an unknown world.

The warm, quick throbs of her heart answered to every tone of his voice; but the heart beat against such bars of pain, bars that kept her prisoned from the joy of his complete approval, though all the young, wild soul of her was already bartered to Manitou for the mere silence and secrecy of life with him.

At first, when he had said "we will go away," she had grasped at the hope that was when he was weak as a child and wholly dependent on her. But he was not quite the

same. She scarcely knew what boon to ask of her Indian god now; but she was growing afraid—afraid.”

“If you are so cold, so unforgiving, you will kill me yet,” he persisted, through sheer lack of any excitement but that of making love to the odd, boyish nature that looked her devotion, but locked her lips from fond speech. Even her hands she would draw from him angrily if he clasped them, the hands guilty of that murderous knife-thrust.

“Did you nurse me back to life only to make me unhappy?” he would ask; and the young heathen heart would ache anew at his fancied misery.

“I do what I can; I am only poor,” she would answer, and work harder and longer to gain the luxuries needed for his content, never daring to quite believe that she herself was one of the wished-for things of his present.

The past was gone. It had held pleasures and hopes, but they seemed now to have belonged to some other man. He was cut off from the rest of life in the world; he could see no future yet, nothing beyond the walls on the heights and the girl who seemed the guardian angel of them.

But his sick fancies turned with longing to dreams of carpeted floors and lace-draped windows, to luxuries uncared for for years that suddenly awoke in him; to the restful, esthetic atmosphere of some libraries and studios remembered by the man he had been; a desire to hear again the cultured tones of the world left behind; to revel again in the alluring surroundings of dramatic or musical life; to come in touch once more with the spirit of a fastidious civilization from which he had drifted.

But all that was of the past. The present had moored him to a cliff dwelling and a young savage whom he might have loved if he had not seen in her merely a slave who was devoted. It is not devotion men love, but change.

And his own moods, now fondly content with sylvan

beauties, and again moodily at war with his prison, would communicate themselves to the girl.

And the girl, watching his face and the lights and shadows in it, said suddenly one day as he lay listless:

"You think of her, the girl in the picture? Is it that you look sorry for?"

"You are an Indian witch, Élouise," he returned. "How did you know that?"

"You want her so much—you love the thoughts of her?" she persisted; and he smiled at her tone, and tried to kiss the hand nearest him, but she lifted it and drew back.

"Do you?" she said.

"Oh, I don't know," he answered, after a moment of thought. "I long for the things she is a part of, the things you do not understand yet, Élouise—the refined life, the gentle speech—"

"Does speech ungente ever come to you here?" was all she said.

"Here?" and her sad tones touched him with self-reproach. "Never, Élouise; your kindness is too great. But you do not understand; this place, that would be beautiful from choice, is growing like a prison."

"You are not alone in it; I live the life too."

"But you are free; you go as you will, and see other faces, talk to other men."

"It is that I have to; their faces are nothing to me."

"Sure?" and he smiled at her disdain. "Is there never a face you remember kindly on your way back to me—never a voice whose words you carry in your thoughts?"

She might have answered, truthfully, "Yes, yours;" it seemed the confession his eyes were wooing. But she looked away from him, and felt remorsefully that she had thought many times through the day of the man who had offered her a home away beyond the hills.

"It is true," she said at last, "of one man I have thought, but he is not young; he is only kind, and he offered me schools and a warm home where his daughter is."

"Who is it?" he demanded, with a sudden spirit of antagonism, and her truthfulness was ended as she answered, "A stranger—many are coming up the river now; but I never think of them."

"When did you see him?"

"It was when I went to the camp for the medicine. He made them be kind to me at Antoine's, and that is all."

"Yet it is enough to give you other words than mine to think of; it is enough to show you are free, while I am in prison," he complained. "How do you suppose I feel shut up here and knowing that other men are looking at you, wanting you, offering you homes—"

He stopped, half-choked by the feelings his own words had stirred in him. The regret for it all, the pity of it all, and prophecies of ostracism he had evoked, made his voice falter. She saw the tears shine in his eyes and heard the tremble in his voice—for her or for himself? Woman-like, she credited him with the unselfishness that was her own.

"What difference what men say? In my heart is no picture of them. I think only of you when they talk; I run to you when away from their eyes; I—"

He caught her hand and kissed it, pressing his face rapturously against the poor skirt of her dress.

"You think only of me?" he whispered, looking up at her. "Ah, my wild bird of the mountain, why have you waited so long before telling me? You must never be cold to me again; of what use is it when you have said you think only of me? Do you not know I will remember that always?"

The hands he had kissed were crossed on her breast, tight—tight. The cross of the church she had thrown

away, but that of a new religion had fallen on her; its weight had forced words to her lips that were not to be recalled. "Always, always," she said, under her breath, but the vow, if it was that, seemed less to him than to some invisible thing beyond and above, to which she flung out her arms in an expressive gesture; and then, covering her face, she walked away, not turning or halting once at sound of his pleading voice that called to her.

The sun was going down, and the shadow of the mountain already fell on the lower hills. He waited until the fever of gladness and wonder would let him wait no longer. Was there ever such a wild, serious sweetheart as this mountain girl? It even seemed a bit of a pity to tame her; he had never found tame squaws interesting. That thought checked him a moment—just as the very beauty of a blossom will at times stay the hand stretched for its possession, and one passes on with a little sense of strength and content in the thought that its sweetness is untarnished by your temptation.

Some such restraint of conscience or sense of esthetic fitness made him halt just so at the thought of Élouise "civilized," and living the life of the average "white man's squaw."

But was he an average man? Surely not. The circumstances were exceptional. Fate had set them aside from the rest of humanity. He had only her, she had only him, in the whole world.

Is not one's own case always exceptionable? It is only the other fellow for whom there are no extenuating circumstances.

He was tired and breathless ere he reached her, though he was sure she had not gone far. A grotto near the top of the cliff, with a low bench of stone half across it, was a retreat she had led him to once. From it one could look

as the eagle looks on the earth below; and the young savage was like one, he thought, as he climbed up the wavering, uncertain way to her nest.

But something besides the eagle heart beat in the young breast under the sign of Manitou, for she knelt at the stone bench as at an altar, and her hands, flung out before her, were clasped in a rigid manner of silent supplication.

She seemed for the first time helpless and appealing to him, and a virtuous sense of chivalry rose above his weakness. To draw her close to him and protect her from the world and the evil of it—to keep her just this childish, devotional pagan—some such thought was with him as he dropped beside her. He even thought of his mother—long dead—by whose side he had knelt as he was kneeling now. But at his touch the girl broke away, leaving the bench, or altar, between them, and leaning, tearful and defiant, against the far wall.

"*Nah!*" she said, with her expressive hands—Indian hands—reached toward him. "It is wrong to follow. I am your slave to work, if you want—always; but the words that white men say to Indian women must not be heard with us. They bring the curses of the spirits—we have enough."

"Élouise!" He saw her mouth tremble at the mere sound of his voice. "Listen, Élouise. I will guard—protect—"

"I can guard," she answered, briefly, with averted eyes, but relaxing nothing of her attitude. To look in his eyes and hear him plead was more than she could bear without confessing to the thing that might make him hate her. Her life seemed very hard to her, poor child! She was happy, miserable, and bewildered, and afraid—afraid of the net that had been thrown, with a sort of magic, about her. "I can guard," she repeated, mechanically, "from enemies, from—"

"But I can never be your enemy," he protested, softly. "Élouise, come to me! You are mine. We are—"

"We are different—not the same," she said, with a sort of passion in her tones. "You are of the white blood that laughs at my people. I am the outlawed blood you would grow ashamed of some day, if I listened to you long. I know—I have seen the white men and the half-breed children they swear at. My father was one of them."

"Your mother was not so cold," he began, but she interrupted him with a short, bitter laugh.

"You do well," she said, with unconscious irony—"well, my master, to tell me of that. Listen!" and for the first time she raised her eyes levelly to his. "Did you ever hear what La Mestina was once in the years that are gone? She was princess. In council she was the one woman; the old people took herbs from her hands as charms; the young were taught to do reverence to her name as they do now to the priests. In the time of planting and the harvest, in the time of the fish and the going away of the hunters, it was Mestina who laid in the face of Manitou the prayer for plenty. She was called wise and of the old king tribe that is never named in this day. She was to live in holiness and to be sung as a lesson to the children born in the years when we are dead. That was La Mestina, the wise woman. But one squaw had ever been loved so in the tribes of the great river, and that other was Louise Ligonin, whom the priests call sainted.

"To-day," she continued, as he did not speak—only looked at her in amaze at the swift speech and graphic picturing of the past—"to-day you can find the wise woman—the squaw king—drunk somewhere among the streets of the white people. She is outlawed by her tribe. She sees not right from wrong. She offered her daughter for a handful of dollars to any man who would take her. And all that

evil and sin has grown in her, a little at a time, just because she was not cold. She chose to be wife to a white man—a good wife, so the hunters have said to me; and where is the white man who remembers the squaw wife when the mountains and the villages of the whites are between them? He was like the others—he never came back.”

“And you would judge me by such a man?” he asked, hurt and reproachful. “Ah, child, you do not understand. Trust me.”

“Wait,” she said, closing her eyes for a moment. “I was little, but I remember when I saw him last, and the words he said; it was of going, and La Mestina was bowed like a slave before him, but he would not take her. He said—he said”—and her words grew slower, as if striving for the half-forgotten words—“that a man who was white had better be dead than tied to one of the red race; that when he goes where the whites live he grows ashamed; that it made no difference whether the squaw was good or bad, the man was ashamed anyway. His heart grows weak in the tents of his friends. His courage dies in shame, and the youth in his spirit grows pale as old age in sorrow. He was ashamed of his life, as the white blood made him—makes all men. Then he left some dollars, and told her not to follow. He did not strike her, but she fell as if he had; and La Mestina was never called the wise squaw again. He was evil—I know—though he laughed often. But he told the truth of his heart about the shame. I have heard the hunters talk—I know, and you must never be ashamed so in the eyes of your people. No, never at all. Shame bites deepest in the bravest hearts, and La Mestina’s daughter would be a shame for any man’s tent.”

“It is not the Indian blood in you that talks,” he protested. “Indian women do not think as you are thinking. You are more white than red. You are more of my race

than your mother's. Don't your own heart tell you that, child?"

He was closer to her, leaning, tired, on the stone bench, his face pale from fatigue, and earnest in its pleading. She was so dear—so much to be desired! Just then the rest of the world was as nothing compared with his wish for the proud heart of the little squaw who trembled at every tender word of his. Would she never reach her hands willingly to meet his? What was the secret of her strength? Even in the midst of his pleading that query came to him. He saw her lay her hand on the eagle-claw on her breast, but the beak or the talons pressed against her flesh told him nothing, and he knew nothing, of the vow of her life, for his sake, to her Indian god.

"I hear your words," she said, looking away from him. "Both the white and the red blood of my heart answers; but"—and she evaded his hand and reached the edge of the cliff—"below there is a quick way to die—see! Just one fall and the bones would break, and the hands of Élouise could work for you never again. Listen—for I tell you! When the day comes that I help you to be ashamed of the Indian girl, the night will find me there for the wolves to eat. I have said it to Manitou—I say it!"

He shivered as though the south wind had really swept to him across her dead face. In that moment, at the thought of losing her, he loved her.

"What can I say to you?" he whispered. "I would not want you different from what you are, my wild eagle of the heights. It is the thought of others seeing you and wanting you that puts me crazy. Your life shall be sacred to me—believe me. If I should lose you—"

She smiled as one wise in years would smile at the causeless dread of a child. The very spirit of motherhood, that is a part of every womanly love, shone in her softened eyes as she bent toward him.

"Come," she said; "too many words have been spoken. The day dies while we talk, and the air of the night is poison to sick bodies. When Élouise is faithless, you can treat her as the Indians treat their faithless squaws. Come; the way is long for your feet, and your face looks tired already. To rest on your bed of pine is best. Come!"

And in the gloaming, tender with promises of repose, they walked in quiet to their rock dwelling. The cool shadows were moist with the kiss of the dew, and sweet silences surrounded them. In an odd way he felt glad that she had triumphed—that she was still the untamed creature who had fled from his whispers; and though she walked beside him, he felt it was as a bird that perches on one's hand only so long as the fingers make no attempt to imprison it.

There is a wondrous fascination to some natures in snaring game like that; not an ethereal phase of love, perhaps, but nevertheless a true one, and it left its impress on the two lives under the cliff for all the days that followed.

CHAPTER XV.

HER SONGS.

AFTER that one passionate outbreak in the gloaming, no word was uttered of the thought that filled each heart. They worked together in the days as he grew stronger, and he learned, from sheer ennui, to cut the fringe of cariboo-skin as it was wanted for hunting-shirts, or select the colors of beads with which to make moccasins and collars gay. In

their speech they were more like boyish companions than ever before; and her visits were few and very short to the settlement at High-Low. Luxuries for the sick man were not needed so often, and she would sell nothing to Antoine that she could trade through Redney's hands—Redney, who was drifting so far from her of late, and whose impatience at her life in the forest increased with every visit he made down the river, where civilization was supposed to exist.

But he bought the cariboo-skin for her work, and carried to Farwell the beaded garments she made, and seemed to have little time for questions or answers when he did come, only that he was more prosperous; he would help her with money if she chose.

But Dunbar objected.

"It is hard enough for me to know you see and talk to men," he said, jealously, "without knowing that you take money from them; and then," he added, more lightly, "on this plantation it is the 'sultana who goes to Ispahan,' and the poor sultan, left in his cave, has nothing to do but think angry, jealous things until she comes back, and never a dancing-girl to help the time pass."

And then he had to repeat for her the poem, as he had many another, in the summer evenings; but her eyes darkened at the unfaithfulness in this one.

"Men may laugh at it in the song, and it sounds pretty," she said, "but if the woman was an Indian wife they would tie her hands and her feet to unbroken colts and rend her to pieces. That is better than making songs about her, or making her pay a few dollars to the white men's chief (judge), like I hear of. I hear that in the white men's country their dollars can pay for all things."

But he did not care to discuss white men's laws and their many-sided exits in the face of her primitive and decided ideas of justice.

"I wonder your people have so few songs, when they have so much to make songs about," he remarked. "Your race should have a poet."

"Our words are not singing words," she answered; "not now. May be once it was all different; may be they made songs, and laughed, and wept. But they have nearly all forgotten. Their hearts have been touched with pains, and the old nations are dead. They will sing laughing songs never any more."

"But you sing," he persisted. "I have heard you of late, in the morning, sometimes, when you thought me still sleeping; and some of the songs seemed pretty, though the words were not plain to me, and the airs are a little too sad. Where did you learn?"

"Where do the birds learn?" she answered. "The Indian learns as they learn, unless it is the Indian of the church who sings for the priest. Ah! it is pretty when they sing like that. Henri did sing greatest of all, so they said. I loved singing when I listened to his words."

"Come here," he said, surlily, but with laughing eyes. She did not obey, but did cease her work and look up in wonder.

"Do you know I am jealous of that priest you used to sing with and like so well? Do you know what he will do? He will find you again some day and take you away from me."

"Not from you, no," she contradicted. "But if it is because he sings well, why do not you too? May be you sing better still; then you can be jealous no more. So try."

When she entered into the spirit of a jest he found her adorable; the only thing that bored him was her seriousness that was so seldom lightened. But she almost laughed as she looked at him and bantered him to sing.

"What song, then—what kind of a song?" he asked; and she smiled again.

"The kind of a song comes from the kind of a mind the singer has. That is how it is with the Indian, if the Indian is a true singer. I hear no true singers among the whites."

"A *true* singer! Now what do you mean by that?"

She shook her head. "If you do not know, there is no other name to tell you by. A true singer, that is all. He that is one makes music of the thoughts in his heart. If they are glad, then he sings proudly; and if they are of sorrow, he has no laughing music to sing; and the same song is not sung twice by the true singer. Long ago, it is said that when the dead came back they spoke often through the words of the true singers and told of things to be, but that is no more. May be it is because the Indian is not so good as he was, and the good dead keep far away, like the angels of the white man, who did walk on the ground once, but who hide in the white clouds now. May be, I do not know; but the dead speak but little now, though the true singers themselves are of them, for few live."

"Then your people *have* poets?" he said, after listening to her soft, slow history of the true singers, of whom he had never before heard. "Poets? Yes, that is what we call the song-makers, and the prophets who give us new thoughts and tell them in music. And your people have the same, but no books to keep their words in."

"No, only the rocks of Arrow Lake, and the marks were made on them before the white men ever looked on our lands. The old people say there are more of the pictured rocks toward the big sea, but their meaning is lost—forgotten, like the words of the true singers."

"Surely, all their words are not forgotten. Have you no memory of a lullaby or a war-song you can tell me of?"

"I? No. I did remember some Henri sung—yes, for a long time; but they are gone, and he sings only the church thoughts now—no eagle-songs, no song for the sun that rises."

"Always Henri! Have you no memory of the past but of him?"

"No good ones, and none of songs, for our singing was always together, when I was yet little. The days were good then, and the old people would look glad and listen when our songs were said. Yes, the days were good days. All the world was happy then, so I thought."

"You must sing for me as you sung for him," he said, pleadingly. "And why should you not? I care for you most. No church would be strong enough to take me from you."

"May be," she answered, musingly. "The church might not be strong in your heart—it is not with the white men; but other things are strong—the thoughts of their kindred and the world on the other side of the mountains."

"But if I should never go back there—if the charm of these peaks grows too great—then what?"

"Oh-h!" she breathed, with a great flush of gladness creeping over her face. "If that should be, the songs could be sung again on this hill of the hunted, for they would sing in my heart."

"You are so glad—you would hide me always here? Sing me a song, then, if you want me to believe that."

"You believe—you know," she said, simply; "but I will sing if the words will come."

The stars, like picket-fires along the line of night, were one by one flashing signals of serenity to each other, and all the earth seemed lying there below in a misty cloak of repose that shone dusk and blue in the faint light. It was the hour of all others in which they were apt to talk at

ease; the hour when the light grew too dim for work, and dreams crowd close in the silence.

She leaned forward, looking across the measureless distances, a faint little smile about her lips. After a little he saw her rest her chin on her hands, and saw her head nod as if keeping time to a low murmur of sound that came from her lips. As it grew louder she glanced around at him in a half-pleased way, as if at her own success, and then the murmur grew into a chant, never loud, the very whisper of a song, but sung to a wild, strange rhythm of sound, unlike any he had ever heard. As near as the translation can give it in English, her words were:

“ High on the brow of the mountain,
Up where the sun loves to linger,
There hide I the best of my treasures;
There guard I, and all the dead help me!
They speak through the leaves in the sunshine,
They look from the stars in the night-time,
They talk low and tell me of gladness,
They cry loud and tell me of sorrow;
Yet I am their child, and they hold me—
The eagle, the last of their king blood.
The heart that I love they will strengthen—
Believe it, for all the dead whisper!
Believe it and rest, oh, my stranger!
Sleep sweet in the nest of the eagle,
Sleep soft as a babe —”

She broke off abruptly, and, after a little, faltering attempt to laugh, bent her head in her hands, and, despite his words of praise, or encouragement, shook her head.

“Élouise is not of the true singers,” she insisted; “she can not sing far, and the clouds drop over the trail of her thoughts; she is lost in the song, as the strange hunter is lost in the snow-fields. She can not see far, as the true singers see.”

“That is because you choose music so sad, though the

words are sweet. Sing something bright, gay, like the French hunters sing as they pass along the rivers. Have you never heard their boat-songs? There is the quick swing as of a dance in their music. You understand? Have you no such songs of the boats in your store?"

"The boat, the boat?" she said, and covered her eyes; "yes, the boat that springs over the lakes as the deer through the woodland. They carry light hearts, the boats. I have seen the gold-hunters go laughing down the rapids in them, glad to go back to the world. You will go, laughing, some day, may be."

"If I do, you will laugh with me," he said, and smiled at the thought. "Sing for me again, and tell me of the boat that will carry us."

She looked at him strangely in the half-light.

"Is the tree yet grown for the boat that will carry us?" she asked; and then, as if answering her own words, she sung, in the same low, sweet semitones, with the beat of the oars through the rhythm:

"The boat is built,
And the water sings
To you. Dear heart, good-by!
It will bear you far,
On its tireless wings,
From me. Good-by! good-by!"

He reached over and touched her hand.

"Do not sing any more," he said, moved in a strange way by her words; "that 'good-by' is like a knife in the heart when you say it like that."

She shuddered at the mention of the knife; the ghost of a blade that flashed in the lamp-light seemed ever at her side.

"Mine will be the heart, then, that the knife touches," she said, and arose. "But I will sing no more. The night

is a night so much of beauty that it makes the heart ache, and sad thoughts come because all life can not be like it—of quiet and peace, like a child that sleeps innocent under the eyes of its mother. That is how the mountains look to-night, under the sky and the stars; but to-morrow storms may come, the sleep of peace will not last; and the ways of the earth are the ways of our spirits, and the tears will come to the eyes because of the days when the beauty and innocence will not be.”

He caught her dress, and laid his head on her moccasined feet as she passed where he lay.

“Never say that you are of Indian thought or blood,” he commanded, tenderly. “What you are I don’t know, for you seem so many things. No Indian is like you. You make me wish I had known no school but that of the mountains, and had never a memory beyond them. If I had not, this life and you near me would be like heaven. You are nobler than anything I have known. Your goodness has made me ashamed many times. I think it will do me good to confess it like this at your feet, my little Indian priestess and poet. Only the memory of the world creeps back sometimes, like the serpent that crept between the first lovers, and I grow unreasonable and sad. Have you no songs that will drive away the devil when he comes to men?”

“I believed there was a devil when I was very little,” she answered; “not now. I think now the devil is only the evil in men’s spirits. They can drive it away themselves if they want to. Many never try.”

But she must have tried after that, for he heard gayer songs from her for many days—songs of the chase, and quaint conceits of the spirits that guard the different game of the hills and hold it in reserve for the true hunter when he comes. Other songs of the stars above, and the blossoms

that open their lips only when certain of the twinkling eyes shine brightly on the earth; songs of the birds, and the messages they bear north and south in the different seasons.

He had lived among the frontier people for many, many moons, and sat at the camp-fire of Indian hunters, but in all their tales and legends had learned nothing of the spiritual or sentimental side of their nature that suggested the wealth of discernment that he found expressed in the chants or untrammelled songs uttered by the girl who seemed to him a fit poet for the writing of her people's history.

What was there she did not seem to him in these days?—a boyish hunter in the early morning, snaring the fish or the small game for their larder, or kneeling like any other little squaw to bake her bread in the ashes, or bend her dark head over the fashioning of garments from the skin of the cariboo. He could talk to her then freely and easily. She was as a little slave; he was the one master she served.

But when the night fell, the darkness drew her, some way, above the squaw who cooked his food. He grew to have fascinating, superstitious fancies about her in the night-time. She was as a voice that spoke of strange things from the darkness; weird, impossible things, that yet seemed natural enough to hear up there on the heights sacred of old to the outcasts of her race.

Was she enough of an Indian witch to know that she was winning a higher place in his thoughts than before? Anyway, her songs grew gladder, and held little notes of joy unshadowed in them. Some of them he caught and wrote down in a little pocket-book he carried, and days after surprised her by repeating her thoughts set to music. Ah, those happy days!—too happy.

One night she came home with softened, tender eyes and sung an odd lullaby with a caressing rhythm through it, and laughed when he asked her what bird had taught it to her.

"No bird; but I did a strange thing at dusk when I left the store. Some men were along the broad path, and I came by the cabin of the new family. I saw through the door the woman with the little one. It laughed as she sung a song that was so sweet. The mother and the child were like a song themselves—a happy song that makes the heart warm. Another woman was there, but she sat in the shadow, and her face was not seen. The child and the gladness in the mother's eyes came with me in my thoughts up the mountain. I wanted to touch the little one once and feel the softness of its hands, but I came away quickly, so that none would see or follow."

And though he laughed at her, she would talk of the child many times, and in her songs grew the tender notes of mother-birds, for the little home picture of the man and woman and their love gift was a revelation to her of a new life.

"You will miss the broad path again and pass the cabin," he said, as she left for the trading-post next time; but she only smiled, and left him, loath to go, yet eager to cover the distance that her return might be quick.

He watched her so long as a glimpse of her could be caught as she descended the mountain. The hours were so long to him alone there. Her presence was all that made life supportable to him in that place. But even their brief partings were worth enduring for the sake of the gladness in her eyes as she came back.

She was long coming back that evening. Time and again did he go down the hidden way, thinking to please her by going to meet her; but each time, after troubled

waiting, he returned, thinking she had come back on some other trail.

And when he did see her it was in surprise, for she appeared so little like the bright young creature who had looked at him with fond, shy eyes in the morning. She seemed tired and her feet lagged heavily, and she avoided meeting his eyes.

"Yes, I am late," she agreed, wearily. "Sick? No, only I thought of other things than the trail, and I walked far, very far, in the wrong way; that is all."

"Was it the baby in the white man's house that you thought of," he asked, teasingly. "Did you see it again, and was that what made you forget to come back to me?"

"I did not forget, but I did see the child; and I am tired, very tired."

But tired as she was she did not sleep, and when morning came she was still silent and thoughtful.

"What is in your mind?" he asked many times. "Has anyone followed you? Is it trouble about your work?"

"No, the work is plenty. I got new work at the post, for the white lady down there—all a beaded suit; and she will pay much for it."

"So you have talked with her. I thought you kept away from women."

"Yes; but they left messages with Antoine. I knew the money would be good to have, so I went where they live. I will not go again. White women ask many questions."

He laughed. "Some of them do, but you must not be troubled because of them."

She cut out the little moccasins and the little gloves for the suit that was to bring much money.

"She must be a very little woman," he remarked, "and with hands and feet even smaller than your own."

She made no answer then, but after a little she said:

"Do the white women where you live all look white and soft like babies, and do they all dress so clean and fine? Where they cooked in that house looked fine as the altar in the chapel."

"Oh, no; there are dirty whites as there are dirty Indians. But has that house made you sorry you live with me in a cave?"

"With you? Listen, I have wanted to ask you. I have thought much of the white women's ways. Does that one, the whitest of all, whose face is on your breast—does she live fine like that in some far-off place where many people are?"

"Does she live so well as a miner's wife in the Selkirks? Why, my child, she is a little girl who owns nearly all of the 'Little Dell,' and in the States has more acres and cattle than you could count; the floors where she walks have coverings of velvet, and she has nothing to do but be happy all her life, and nothing to prevent it. There is nothing in these hills so fine as the life she is used to. She is a flower such as grows only in the sunny, sheltered places."

"Then she could never live long in our mountains," mused the girl, "for even the snow-birds die in our winters."

"What has put such fancies in your head?" he asked, irritably; "the white woman who lives at the trading-post? Be sure you will see no woman who can ever give you an idea of how lovely she was—little Della! But talk of something else to-day. I want to forget."

"Is it so hard to do so? Then what if somewhere in the world you cross her path again, and if she looks at you as she looks in the picture—laughing?"

"Élouise!" he cried, in sharp protest, "you don't know what you are saying. Be still; never speak of her or of that other life again. I am outside of it all now, and my

heart grows homesick when you remind me. Let me be content here—if I can.”

She nodded her head, and in silence marked on the toe of the moccasin the form of a heart that was to be beaded in scarlet.

“And I would rather you could avoid the white women when you go down there,” he persisted. “They send you home to me like a dark, disturbed shadow of yourself. Since you declare that you are so entirely Indian, I’ll just tell you that the less an Indian knows of the white people’s ways the better the Indian is. I don’t know why it is so, when the white race is supposed to be superior, but results confirm it. Do you understand? I like you best as you are. Don’t try to be like the white women. Don’t sit in their houses and let them talk to you.”

“Never any more,” she agreed, listlessly.

All her former interest in the glories of Ewing’s cabin had departed. He wondered, as he looked at her, if it was through envy that she came back gloomy from the houses of the whites. Was she, after all, woman enough to long for the purple and fine linen of life? He wondered yet more when, after a long silence, she said in the evening:

“Would you let me once more see the face you carry for a charm?”

“Yes,” he answered, “if you in return will tell me why you wear on your breast the feathers sacred to the braves. Is that for a charm too?”

But she would not tell him, only stood stolidly, as if not hearing, until he loosened the chain and laid the locket in her hand, smiling at her childish wron, for he had no doubt she thought of the little oval frame as of a pretty toy.

But it was the face she looked at a long, long time, studying its fair lines, until, with a quick sigh, she raised her

hand to her hair—straight, black, unlovely hair when compared with the fair halo of gold about the pictured face; and then her eyes fell critically on her own hard hands and her own weather and work stained garb, at the moccasin that was torn, and at the leggings that were ripped and stripped of the gay fringe that once adorned them. For Élouise, the maker of gay garments for others, had little time to spend in decking her own beauty of form, even if she had been conscious of its possession, which she was not.

“I tell you what I think,” she said, at last. “The face looks weak and pretty, like a face of a child; but I think that she is stronger than women who have strength. I mean she could get with a look of her eyes what stronger women would beg for; and people will love her in their hearts, though she never did good to anything.”

He looked at her in amazement; the analysis of character was so unlike an Indian, though he felt its accuracy and was irritated at it. The girl criticised was of his order—a gay, charming creature, easily comprehended by him, and very attractive to people of taste. To be sure, there was nothing subtle or deep in her personality. Who would wish a girl to possess such attributes? And for this boyish huntress, this witchy songstress—even the devoted nurse—to speak of her with a note of contempt in her tones was a grievance. He felt angry that the things he and men like him loved were deemed trifling by the half-savage critic, who dressed in rags, and often made a dinner of roots.

“She was but a child,” he said, petulantly, and looked at the fair pictured face. “Why, she was but fifteen years old.”

She laughed shortly, angrily, and turned away.

“A child! In the year I was fifteen I swam the river where it measured a mile. I was alone on the trail for three days in the mountains, and killed a deer heavier than

a man could carry. A child! The whites think well if their boys of twenty can do so much."

It was the first boastful words he had ever heard from her, and her ill-concealed anger surprised him.

"Why, Élouise!" he began, and reached out his hand with a conciliating smile and gesture. But she drew back, with tremulous lips, and tears in her stormy eyes.

"*Nah!* I am but an Indian; keep your fair words for fair faces. The ways of Élouise are not gentle ways, and she is best alone."

And then she passed quickly, as a bird that flies low to cover, and he sat alone in the silence, thinking that she had never appeared so like to other women as when she had turned on him with angry, tear-wet eyes. And the cause of it? Was she, for all her strange, passionate threats and devotion, only a petulant child at heart?

But it was no heart of a child from which a wail as of prophecy was sent out from that nook in the cliff far above.

Creeping close, he listened to the words sung lowly, and the sadness and despair of them brought an ache to his heart. The shadow of her own young desolate soul seemed to fall over him, and a realization of pain such as had never touched his life. He did not speak to or interrupt her; he did not even see her face; only the voice floated weirdly out from that altar of stone where he felt she was kneeling—the voice with the sound of tears in it:

"Alone! lone am I.

The winds cry my call;

The heart snows are nigh

When love's bright leaves fall,

And they fall,

And they fall

On the grave of my dead,

On the grave

Of a life

That is dead; that is dead!"

CHAPTER XVI.

A PRIEST OF THE WILDS.

IF there is any one time more than another when an Indian village appears a place loathsome to a mind of refinement, that time surely is in a season of sickness, when the seed of contagious disease is scattered among their ill-prepared tribes.

Year after year the quaking demon of the ague haunts their marsh-lands, and leaves the families of fishers powerless to contend with the deadly fevers that creep up on the hot winds of the south. The cholera, small-pox, and other devastating ills sweep annually across scattered tribes, leaving only remnants of families to be attacked with renewed force in the season to follow.

In such a village, one which the mightiest of hunters and the strongest of their braves would avoid, there dwelt through the days and weeks of that summer the man of whom Neil Dunbar had heard so much in that haven of the unnamed nation.

The "red death," so called because of the fatality of it among those of Indian blood, had raged with cholera-like fatality from the time the frost left the marshes.

"If I only had you across there in my own hills," their priest and nurse would say often, and point to the lines of blue in the east that showed where the mountains were. "But here! it weakens the strongest to live on these levels where the soil is gray and white in the sun, and where the water stands green in the pools."

For they were not of his people or his race, these creat-

ures whose bodies were squat, and who reminded him of fish, for they could neither walk nor run as his tall, stalwart people of the hills could do; but swim! there was no water-born creature that could live more at home in the rivers than they. The "fisher people," they were called, being a mongrel lot whose ancestors had been wreckage from the Cathlamets, the Waak-i-cums, and the Clatsops, who, too weak to hold their own against the stronger tribes of the fishing-grounds, had crept northward to the desolate stretches of glade-land where they dragged their nets and their lives sluggishly through the seasons, and made hampers of reeds to trade to the hunters and fishers who packed dried meats for use in winter. No herds were owned by them. A plurality of wives was all that distinguished the man of wealth from the pauper among them, and the man who possessed the greatest number was chief of the lodges, by common consent. Surely a field for a missionary; but in the actual care of the people, young and old, in their sickness, there were left but few moments for the religious teaching that is the work of priests.

Their filth, their degradation, and miseries might have made many a mind wonder if, after all, it was not a mistake to try to prolong lives like theirs; swinish souls, with no sort of comprehension of the devotion to a supposed duty which sent the tall priest of the huntsmen down from the mountains, into the very resting-place of horrid death.

But he baptized them; he closed their eyes with the benediction of the faith for which he lived; not a touch or speech from him to show that his duty could be a repulsive thing when it came to the acceptance of such creatures by the shepherd of souls.

And if at times he escaped into the sleepless stillness of the night, and envied the stars that seemed gemming the brow of his distant mountains, he did penance by added devotion

to his charges until the gray dawn crept over the sullen lands.

Few of the older people were left alive, and the rest were like frightened children, needing a commander. An attempt had even been made by some of the terror-stricken to burn the lodges with the dead and the fatally sick, offering up this as a sacrifice to the spirit they believe exists in flame—an evil power that they do homage to through fear, and one entirely antagonistic to that which they suppose answers the plea of their medicine men for many fish.

More than once, in closing the eyes of some young dead thing, he felt a throb of thankfulness that the other child, the one of the mountains and the eagle's eyrie, whom he had cared for in her babyhood, was free somewhere on those blue heights. Her life, unfit as it was for a girl, seemed so immeasurably above that which these creatures lived and died in. Even if she died somewhere up there, no death on the hills could come in so horrible a garb as the pestilence in these fetid swamps.

Once he heard of La Mestina. She had been seen by a hunter who was going north to Lake Quesnelle. She was up in the Big Bend region, and she was alone. The man had an idea that the little squaw, her daughter, had run away from her; had heard something to that effect, but did not remember well.

Run away! The thoughts of the priest went back to the other time she had done so—poor passionate, brave little Élouise!

"If she has fled from Mestina, then she is gone also from the places of the white people; she will live in the hills," he thought, and tried to be satisfied. He feared less the wildness of the forests for the child than he did the haunts of men. Yet the bodies of the disease-stricken amphibians were forgotten ever and anon in his anxiety for the life and

the soul of the young creature for whom he felt in many ways responsible.

Only through him had she knelt at the altar of his God, or bent her wild will by his persuasion toward the faith from which her mother had turned. Her first communion, her confessions—all her stumbling steps toward the acquirement of divine grace—his voice, his hand, had led her to. She belonged to him as to no other, if only by the grant of the old people that day long ago when he had borne her from death in the nest of the eagle.

In the months of late he had been making plans for her—for the child that was growing to womanhood and whom he longed to see among those devoted women of the Eastern convents. It was all he could think of for her. She was unlike either the white people he knew or the Indians they had known together; only in the bosom of the church could a sure refuge be found for such a stray.

Yet the days went by, and the people died, and others sickened, and he seemed tied endlessly to their level lands; and never a traveler passed by whom he could send a message to the mountains.

He envied every bird that flew to the east, and only the patience of the Indian blood in him made it possible for him to murmur prayers and await their fulfillment.

And one evening at dusk he arose from his work of laying a child's body in the earth, and turned to his one assistant—a boy, yet strong, whom either shame or devotion kept close to the "black gown."

"Have you ever been so far as the hills that rise?" and he pointed to the faint blue waves that touched the pearly sky; but the boy shook his head; the mountains were as another world to him.

"No hunter you know in all this marsh-land who would carry word there that I can not take myself?"

"If I could go on the water," began the youth, doubtfully; but the priest shook his head. In his own country a dozen messengers would have answered to his need, with never a question as to distance or danger.

"There is one there," said the boy, pointing northward, "whose mother you buried the day before this. He moves over much ground. If you could watch alone to-night, I will find him—may be."

And Father Henri watched alone, many times praying for a soul on the mountains while a soul was flitting from a senseless body within reach of his hand in that marsh-land swamp. All at once a great sense of fear had touched him for her. If it had not been for the helpless creatures about him who had no other hope!

Severely did he take himself to task for the impulse to desert these people, who, even to a priest, a disdainer of the perishable body, seemed hopeless. Only the grace of God and the charity of the saints could ever leaven that mass of humanity into conscious, enlightened personalities.

They caused him to think with a great gratitude of his people of the hills, of the hardy hunters, and the women, chaste and modest, among whom he had grown; and among them all his thoughts would wander so strangely to the one child who was somewhere on those heights needing a friend, and, he feared, possessing none but him—her brother Henri, her father confessor.

"She is no worse off than many another girl of our people," he told himself; "why, then, should the face of this one come so suddenly and strangely between my eyes and the dying faces about me? It is as a temptation of the devil to draw my thoughts from holy offices. *Asperge me Domine*," and he repeated a Latin prayer fervently, thinking between the sentences, "But Élouise can be no emissary of evil powers; the child was good always."

Something strong had taken hold of his heart—a troubling something as vague as unformed prophecy. It was confusing his thoughts and lifting him above the swamplands of the “red death;” and every rustle of wind in the grass seemed like a voice calling him to the mountains.

And in the dusk of that day the child he thought of sung as the “true singers” sing—the cry of a loneliness to come.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE HOME OF THE WHITE WOMEN.

HIGH-LOW had been properly shocked at the spectacle of a favorite comrade cut at by the little squaw, and properly interested in the disappearance of the former; but as the boom of prosperity drifted up the river with the warm season those incidents, together with other notable ones, had been left to find their own place in the pages of High-Low history. Dunbar was of the past, a past when the post was in doubtful uncertainty as to any future. That was over. A future was assured, and a golden present *almost* within reach.

The mine men affirmed that good luck had been brought to the hills by Miss Della; others said it was by the baby; anyway it had arrived, and, in the commotion that ensued, the mystery of the man's loss seemed forgotten—by the majority.

Of course Miss Della herself did not belong to the majority, for never a ride or walk did she take without the thought of the handsome fellow who was lost to her; and

in all the ranks of those who flocked into the little valley she could see no one equal to him—him, the prince charming of her childhood. Though, to confess the truth, her regret, while sincere, did not prevent her from coquetting with many men of many minds in most things, but unanimous in their opinion of Miss Della's perfection.

Not that she was heartless; she was no more so than the average girl who likes attention, and there was not a man in the hills from whom she would not have turned loyally at sight of the missing one. But he did not come and the others did, and she was only a girl, after all.

But to be only a girl, and not a very big girl, either, she had grown to be a power in the settlement, a sort of autocrat of the valley, her only rival being the all-pervading spirit of Mr. Clevents, who had suddenly adopted High-Low, boom and all, and managed to have a substantial interest in every substantial scheme afloat within its limits.

"Tell you what it is, Mrs. Nannie," said the girl, apropos of nothing, "if I ever conclude to trade Uncle off for another business partner, I'll propose to that handsome ranger, for that is what he seems to me—a ranger into all professions and enterprises."

"And what would you do with the other ninety and nine aspirants for the same position—whistle them down the wind?"

"Oh, no; sing them a song and ask them to supper. That would appease all of them I am acquainted with."

"Perhaps;" and then, after a little silence, "Do you notice how baby seems to miss Redney? When any of the other men come in he looks so eager, and then so disappointed. I told Milt yesterday I believed his chum was an Indian wizard."

"And what did he say?" asked the girl, who was smoothing out her rebellious crown of tresses.

"Well, really, I don't believe he said anything," returned Nannie. "But he would never doubt very strongly any attributes that boy laid claim to. Those two have a religious sort of faith in each other; and I know Redney's affection for Milt is all that kept his royal sulkiness here after our arrival."

"How modest you are! Why do you not say *my* arrival?" laughed the other. "Don't you remember how slow he was to accept me as a citizen?"

"A frame of mind he must have recovered from," remarked Mrs. Nannie, with significant dryness, "since that whip and spur look like proof of an open bribery to retain you."

The girl's eyes turned to the glittering bits of a riding outfit, and smiled, though her cheeks did flush a little at the words.

"Well, if you had heard the ungracious way in which he presented them, you might form another opinion," she said, carelessly. "He said that since I did go riding around with tenderfeet, I might as well go 'right,' and have something to manage my mule with; and that little silver spur is really lovely. Who would have thought of his buying such a thing; and I wonder how much it cost."

"Rather an unusual thought for you, isn't it? I'm afraid you count the cost of things too seldom."

"For myself, perhaps," she agreed; "but it is of the boy I am thinking now, and of the hole these trinkets must have made in his earnings; for I don't suppose even the superintendent of a portage gang receives a princely salary in this region."

"And while you are thinking about him at all, why not count the cost of treating the poor half-breed as though he were some dethroned prince?" suggested the little matron, warningly.

"Why, Mrs. Ewing—"

"Now, now, don't get indignant! It is very lovely of you, and all that; shows the right Christian spirit, I suppose; only I've an idea that the natives here would have to get used to the Christian spirit by degrees. Too much of it at a time is likely to turn the heads of the best of them."

"I thought Mr. Redney's head pretty level," returned the girl, carelessly; "and he is decidedly the best and most interesting specimen I've seen, barring the little moccasin-maker. I know she would be interesting if only she could be made to talk; and her voice is so musical! I hardly knew whether she had fallen in love with me or was afraid of me, but her speechless gaze was something awful to face, though she is so pretty!"

"Oh, her wonder was at the splendor of the new riding-dress, the glitter of the spur and whip. No doubt they are the first of their kind in this region," hazarded Mrs. Ewing, rather averse to the discussion of the girl's new specimen. "She is, I suppose, simply an ignorant little imbecile, with brains enough to follow a pattern in beads on deer-skin, but with not a spark of the intelligence you fancied shone in her eyes. The ragged, staring creature said nothing because she thought nothing, I suppose."

"Well, she is pretty, anyway," insisted the girl; "and do you know I believe Mr. Clevents must have thought so too, for after she left I watched her—she is so wonderfully graceful for a squaw—and, looking across the ravine, I saw that gentleman watching her too, and not with the naked eye, either. I saw him, with that field-glass in his hand, climb up where that bald knob is—you know you can see so many peaks from there; and for three full hours he never came down, and the glass was turned always toward the mountain Mr. Redney told us the legends of."

"The mountain of your tipsy apparition?"

"Never mind. I'm going up there again some day when

Redney can go along. You know I have not such a great while left for excursions; this summer is going."

And a shortly drawn breath, like a smothered sigh, followed her words, to tell that the loss the summer had brought was never forgotten, even for the later attractions of "specimens."

"And is it not nearly time for your uncle's return?" asked Mrs. Ewing. "Oh, how I shall miss you!"

"Never mind. We will have the distinction of being remembered in the history of High-Low as the first 'family' women within its limits, and that alone is worth a pilgrimage up the Columbia;" and then she consulted a letter, over which she wrinkled her pretty brows.

"Someone has been telling that uncle of mine fairy stories about the terrible midsummer floods up here," she observed, "and he is afraid a land-slide, or something equally terrible, will overtake us if we should linger through August. It seems ridiculous to fear snows in the mountains more in midsummer than all the rest of the year combined."

"Well, I confess I can't see the ridiculous side of the question so much as the fearful," acknowledged the other. "The stories I have heard here of floods from the snow in the summer are not reassuring to pioneers. Think of that Indian village that was buried on the other range last summer!"

"Oh, think of something more pleasant," suggested the girl—"of how surely your fortune is to be made in this Selkirk country, and how charming it will seem to have you to come and see in the summers that are to be. I shall feel like a native when I come through the Arrow lakes next time. You need not be surprised if I even discard civilized raiment at the railroad terminus, and make my canoe-trip in beads and deer-skin. Really, I am longing to see

that Indian dress. How soon was it to be done? I forget what she said about that."

"I don't think she said," returned Mrs. Ewing. "I inferred that her acceptance of the commission was a favor you must be duly grateful for, and that time was not to be considered in the productions of such an artist as your ragged protégé."

"You are too nice a woman to be sarcastic," commented the girl; "and I've an idea that her ragged highness is too independent to be the protégé of anyone, though, if she were not—why, you've awakened a bit of inspiration in me—if she were not, what a delightful novelty it would be to take so pretty an Indian back home with me! Nannie Ewing, if lucre or wooing words can entice her, she is mine."

"I believe you," said Milt Ewing, thrusting his head in at the window; "especially if the words are yours. But what diabolical plot is it I have overheard but a part of?"

"Oh, she is possessed with the idea of taking back with her some live-stock in the shape of Indians. She wants to begin with a young squaw who makes moccasins and such things."

"A squaw! Mr. Ewing, that title gives you no idea of the character I mean. She is a rarity, I know, and as pretty as her name—Élouise, or Alouise. May be you know her. Redney told me her mother was a real princess in their tribe."

Ewing nodded.

"The most appalling female I ever met, even on the frontier," he observed. "The girl is a degree or so better, I believe, but hardly the sort you would want as a companion."

"I'm sure Redney knows her," began the girl; and Redney's partner smiled.

"But that boy knows everybody, good and bad, in the country," he returned, "so that argues no excellence; and an Indian would have to be pretty bad if he wouldn't treat her friendly—on account, may be, of that Indian mother that he never knew. But if you really want a hostile captive to take home, you'd better go to one of the mission-schools and get a good 'church' red that can say its catechism without a break."

"But it isn't any Indian I want," she persisted; "it is this particular one that is so pretty and so odd."

"Well, you can't have her," he said, smiling teasingly, "so find another plaything—that's a good child; for down here at the camp a swamp red arrived an hour ago. Antoine says he came from their priest to get word of the girl, to have her go back to their church, I suppose. Anyway, he is a messenger from the priest, and is searching for your charmer; and the church is a power among these Chinook country reds."

"Well, I'm not strikingly irreligious, but in this case I'm going to pit myself against the emissary of holiness. Where is that herald from the swamps? and where is the girl supposed to live?"

"I heard Antoine tell him that no one knew," he replied to the latter question; "and the last I saw of Mr. Strange Indian, Clevents had tackled him, and they seemed to be trying very hard to understand each other. He does speak the most outlandish guttural jargon you ever heard. If he is a specimen of the flat-land tribes, I don't think you will want to make any collections or adoptions among them."

"So Mr. Clevents is trying to cut me out, is he?" queried the young lady, frowningly. "So much for the constancy of man. I was flattering myself that I filled the horizon of his thoughts, and behold, he has hidden interests—interests in squaws!"

"But he is not a bad sort of a fellow, for all that," returned Ewing; "and one thing sure: when he takes a liking to anyone, he doesn't change his mind often. See how persistently he has tried to help Redney."

"Oh—Redney!" and her tone was an odd combination of contempt and fondness. "Where is the virtue required for liking him? I think it would be a rather small soul that did not like that boy. I am fond of him myself."

"Your fondness is too frank to be very deep, I guess," remarked Mrs. Ewing; but the girl shook her head.

"Don't you believe it; I am neither more nor less than I pretend; and I'm sure that the most decided liking I ever had for anyone—and that was poor Neil—was plain to all observers, and I frankly did my half of the courting. But, of course, that was all very different from this ranger-like, out-of-door comradeship with the mountaineers."

"Of course," agreed Ewing, curtly; "but some of them might come to grief through not being bright enough to understand the difference," and then he walked away from the window, leaving the principal stockholder of the "Little Dell" mine in a state of bewilderment.

"Now, what did I say?" she asked. "Nothing to vex anyone, yet surely Mr. Ewing spoke as if I tried his patience in some way. But men are such incomprehensible creatures at the best."

"And women never are?" said Mrs. Ewing, with a quizzical smile. "But don't mind Milt; he's been out of sorts ever since Redney was up last. He misses him at his work, too; and do you know, Milt is just superstitious enough to think that boy a sort of mascot, and the prospects for silver much less because his luck has gone down the river with that canoe party. And Redney himself is not quite the same; the river life, or something, has changed him."

The girl did not reply, but her glance turned after a little

to the little whip and spur hanging there as a mute reminder of how entirely the sulky, defiant young nomad was changed into an attendant self-conscious cavalier.

She had been one of the darlings of the gods all her life, and had numberless gifts, costly and dainty, extended to her, but among them all nothing had ever appealed to her with the dumb pathos of that bit of riding-gear. She remembered little economies practiced against himself in several ways, and his personal outfit for the river-work that Milt had growled over, saying it was all insufficient for his needs. Poor boy! And all the time it must have been that he could bring her back something worthy her acceptance.

"Of course the idea is an awfully conceited one on my part," she told herself repeatedly; "but how am I to help it, when the fancy will come every time I look at the things and remember his face? Love? Not at all, Dell Raeforth! Yet I could scarcely keep the tears out of my eyes as I thanked him; and may be, after all, he was only trying to be civil with a stranger, and may be, after all, his thoughts were with that pretty squaw for whom he buys beads—more than for you, Mistress Conceit."

And away down the course of the Columbia a dark-eyed boatman gave swift strokes with the paddle that was hurrying his canoe northward; and when the sky flamed golden toward night, he would say in his heart, "It ain't so pretty as her hair in the sunshine;" and when a bird triumphant would send a shower of sweet sounds out across the water, his thoughts would revert to a clear ripple of laughter that had music in it.

"And you've got considerable to learn yet," was his summing up of the comparison, and his gratuitous information to the feathered songster.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WARNINGS OF THE HEIGHTS.

IN the time of the harvest moon, strange changes are wrought by the warm nights and the sun that beats persistently on the white peaks of those northern ranges. Floods descend beneath cloudless skies, and into the tiny pools where the trout slept in high ravines will suddenly be dashed big torrents, and great timbers be borne downward with a force terrific.

Sometimes the smallest of rills will search unseen for a secret underground path from the peaks to the great river, and gurgle its triumph to buried rocks and wealth of mineral over which it runs. And then, as its strength and its pride grow more confident, a great thing happens to it, and the hidden bit of life in it, like an unspoken passion that has slept long, bursts forth and shatters the frame that held it; tosses great boulders like egg-shells down the gray distance, and tears great reaches of timber and rock-land from the side of the mountain, starting them slowly, slowly, but with every added step of their way gaining a momentum that sends sounds as of rumbling thunder along the range, and churning through fair valleys that are laid barren wastes by the passionate force from above—and all because of a tiny secret hidden once in the breast of the mountain.

When the clouds that are "weather-breeders" are seen gathering about the peaks in the summer-time, the Indians move themselves and their fishing-traps along the ravines of the lower hills. The waters swell everywhere as the

snows melt; but if the snows should melt and the rains descend at the same time, then indeed are the bravest careful, for the death by it has nothing of glory in it. No prayers can be said over the graves never found; and to die with the taste of mud in one's mouth and choke in the foaming yellow of the rivers!

The people of High-Low felt they had nothing to fear from the ravages of the midsummer snow-fiend, as the hills nearest them were not capped with white to any great extent. To be sure, the splashing of Tumwata Creek told them it was likely to grow into a small river in a wet season; but the houses had never been built very close to it, and then the highlands were close and foot-hold easy.

But more than one of the weather-wise among the Selkirks turned dubious glances toward peaks that were wearing caps of ice and snow, but hidden now by pale clouds held on the summits as if by enchantment—mists that all the force of the sun could not drive away.

"But it's not the going away, it's the coming back, that is a thing of interest to the community," Ewing explained to the ladies, who wondered that a filmy little cloud should be noted and commented on by people who had witnessed terrific storms of the highlands. "The mists gather and gather like that, and then come down in rains that set glaciers swimming down the valleys."

"Those lazy, innocent-looking little clouds?"

"Yes," and Mr. Clevents, hearing her, smiled blandly on the speaker; "it is not alone the gigantic things that create havoc in the mountains. I've seen a very small nugget set a whole camp wild."

"Indeed! Was it a bronze nugget of the kind your flat-land friend was seeking yesterday? And, by the way, did he find her?"

Clevnts glanced at her sharply. Was she as innocent of

the squaw's late history as the Ewings supposed? He had his doubts sometimes when she persisted in questions of that dusky-eyed straying one.

"No, he did not; and he has gone back to his Indian priest."

"That is one of the novel things I have yet to see up here," she said—"an Indian priest. Does he say mass in Chinook? or blend the fierceness of a scalp-dance with his invocations to the saints?"

"He is as dignified as an Arab, and as domineering as the mischief with the poor reds who happen to be faulty," said Ewing.

"And I hear he can whip any of his converts, in pairs or by the half-dozen," added the other man. "He would be their mighty warrior if he did not happen to be their priest."

"Are all their clergy heroes?" asked the girl. "Don't you remember Chief Simon telling us of the brave trapper priest who was his nephew, and how proud he was of him?"

"This is the same man," returned Ewing; "and I guess he's proud of himself."

CHAPTER XIX.

A BLACK ROBE.

AND as the light of the hot day died out over the flatlands, and the vapors of the hot night arose from the brackish pools, the proud one bent under the weight of a

dead woman, and began the task of burial that came as regularly as the darkness.

The youth who helped was tired of the dead faces and the prayers—the prayers that might be a great medicine, but the people died, just as they died before the black robes were seen among them. His eyes and thoughts wandered from the new grave to the lands south where the water was. Down there the people who fished moved in boats, and moved swiftly, and his wish was for the life they lived; but here for a day's journey in any direction there was nothing but—

"*Papa—nah!*" he exclaimed, suddenly breaking in on the prayer for the dead; and the father looked as he was told, for the hand of the boy was pointed eastward at a thing that rose and fell on the far levels—a black body against the dusk sky.

And then, with a sign of the cross marked on the air, the priest again bent his bared head in the service for the dead; but if words were uttered, none were heard by the boy, who, rebuked by the cross, knelt at the foot of the grave, and wondered that the other showed so little interest in the coming of the messenger he had tried so hard to secure.

"Is it always the dead bodies, then, that the black robes care most for?" he thought, stealing glances at the intense face of the other, that never raised, though minute after minute went by and the darkness grew. And at last, when the sound of feet came to them until they halted close beside where they stood, it was the new-comer who broke the silence.

"*Tyee*" (chief), he said, questioningly; and the priest, with again that sign of the cross, turned to him.

"You found her?—you bring me word?" he asked, with a little pause between the questions, while he scanned the man's face for hope.

"No; the squaw Élouise is not where the white people are. None can follow her trail—so they tell me. I would have tried, but you said, 'In four suns be here again,' so I am come."

"Is that all they say—the people?"

"One man said more. He is a chief, I think. He asked me many things of you, and then he gave me this to bring."

It was a leaf from a note-book, but the darkness had grown too deep for reading its contents.

"You are tired from a fast trail," Father Henri said, quietly; "go into my tent and rest. The best I have of food is yours; you have served me well."

"You served my people first," said the messenger, simply, and followed where a bit of fire glimmered under a kettle. In it fish were stewing, and the light outlined two forms that lay within the opening of a tepee. One face looked strangely still.

Father Henri knelt to read the lines written in pencil, and then arose, standing in the shadow, with his face turned toward the grave he had just left; and away beyond the grave loomed the peaks of the Gold Range.

The messenger had dropped a stout, light walking-stick, and it lay near the feet of the priest, who stooped and picked it up, and then reread the note, that said:

"I am the man who won the girl you look for at a game of cards. I count on you being a square man when I tell you she is living alone with some man on a mountain near here. If you have any good influence over her, come and use it. I'll back you with several ounces of dust, and help do whatever you want for her. Ask for

"CLEVENTS."

That was all. Brief enough, but the sense of it seemed to creep so slowly through his brain. Won at a game of

cards! his little Élouise, his unspoiled young eagle of the heights. Living alone with some man! she, the untamed one, snared by some treachery, held through hated force, and never a one to aid her. Had she been calling for him through those summer nights when he had seemed to hear her voice on every breeze that blew?

The messenger, kneeling to build up the fire under the kettle, heard something like a moan from the priest above him, but looking up saw only the dark, impassive face, with lips close-set; and the youth, who emptied more water into the boiling mess, answered the stranger's look of inquiry by saying, lowly:

"It is for the people in the graves that he makes cries, and acts like a medicine man that works cures. There are nights when he kneels till the stars all cross the sky, and I would be sure he weeps but that he is too brave. Come away; he talks to the charmed beads."

But the priest, raising the rosary and the crucifix near his lips, uttered no audible word to them, only it seemed that he kissed them.

"Look to the sick there—and the dead," he said to the boy; and then, with the stick yet in his hand, he turned back into the darkness, toward the grave they had just left.

"He will fast there till the sun comes," said the youth, discontentedly, thinking of the very few in the tepees who were able to wait on themselves; "he thinks more of the spirits of the dead than of any living thing."

But when the sun came up, the black gown of Father Henri was out of range of the eyes of the flat-lands; and, while the dead of the marshes were half-forgotten, a living soul imperiled was drawing him like a magnet to the hills.

The white dawn was creeping through mists of the east when he reached the shores of the Columbia. In the time

of one night he had covered the ground of a two days' march, and a glance at the waters told him of thaws on the heights. Straight above him he knew the white of the snows was hidden by the green giants of the primeval wood, and *she* was perhaps hidden somewhere in the course of relentless glaciers.

He pushed on through the wild growth as animals push who hear the hunters on their trail, and have never a moment of time to turn aside for obstacles. Even the natives of the forest seemed to understand that his haste made him no foe to be feared, for small eyes peered at him from the security of the undergrowth. A deer and fawn, couched in the herbage, darted upward along the stream, and then turned to gaze at him with soft, sad eyes, while a bear plunged into the river and swam across, making a deliberate halt on the far shore, and sauntered fearlessly along the sands before disappearing in the forest opposite.

But ere the fog lifted, other sounds than the stealthy steps of animals fell on his ear—the sounds of voices—the voices of many; some were on land, some on the water, and all discussing the sudden rise of the wind and water, and the dangerous swiftness over rocks now submerged.

They called to him, asking of the country above—any damage yet done to the camps by the snow torrents, and what signs for rain on the mountains.

"It has come already," he said, briefly. "Miles north it has been on the hills. The mist is here now; the rain will follow."

"Oh, I say!" called out a voice from the water, "tell us something better than that. Give us time to reach High-Low before the clouds fall; we never can make it up-stream in canoes if the water rises."

The speaker was a man of about fifty, a good-looking fellow, with crisp curls of gray forming a rather striking

contrast to the bronze of his face; for, though apparently not a Selkirk man, he was not a tenderfoot, his outfit looking like that of a well-to-do prospector who had traveled many trails, and a dauntless air of good-humor seemed his distinguishing feature.

"Oh, you're a reverend, are you?" he continued, with a more scrutinizing glance at the solitary form that had appeared on the shore; "then I'm left again. I've been paddling my own canoe, but I don't know the riffles above, and hoped you were a native river-man. The boss of this freight gang might spare me a man, but he's the surliest white chap I ever saw."

The boss, who was hurriedly helping break camp, and who had good ears, straightened up at the words.

"But I don't happen to be a white chap," he returned; "and as you froze to this outfit on your own invite, I don't allow to be accountable for you. You can swim up, for all me."

It was Redney, and he recognized the priest.

"But I'll find boat-room for you any day," he continued, and came closer. "You don't know me, but I reckon you can't be anyone but Father Henri, the Indian priest. Louise told me of you."

"Élouise—you know her—you know of her now?"

"Not much," and his face flushed for the truth in the statement—he had meant at first to know such a great deal; "but she's alive and—and well, I guess. She's in High-Low mostly when I get there. If you've any word to send—"

"I take my own word; and I will guide the boat of the stranger over the rocks, since he has no help, but only if he goes at once."

Redney turned away in a sulky sort of unconcern. His disapproval of the independent stranger was plain.

"Well, I tell you, now, I'm grateful for this," began the

stranger with much heartiness; but the priest only pushed the garpoint from shore and picked up the paddle.

"You owe me no thanks," he said; "the rest of the trail to camp is shorter by boat than on foot, or I would not be boatman for you this morning."

The rest of the boats were soon left beyond sight or sound; all were heavier laden than that of the stranger, and so it was that it, as courier of the fleet, met first the whirl of water that came down in great waves bearing the debris of the higher shores, along which the river leaped in so short a space that the canoe could scarcely be dragged quickly enough beyond its boundary.

Bits of cut timber and sticks with the mark of the ax on them mingled with wood torn by the roots from the shore. The priest noted then, and threw the rope of the canoe to its owner.

"Lash it to the tree where it rests until you carry its load up above, if you wish to save it, and then if you follow straight the way I go you will reach the camp in the half of an hour."

"But, see here! Hello! Curse the luck! can't you lend a hand? Some things in this canoe are too valuable for me to lose."

"And some human things across that hill may be lost while we wait," answered the native, and turned into the forest toward the north, where a call, strong, though silent, seemed vibrating until it reached his heart.

CHAPTER XX.

THE GENTLEMAN FROM WASHINGTON.

THE wind was whistling down from the mountains with a chill on its wings. The smaller timber was bending low under its force, and the heavier growths creaked ominously. Clouds low and black were driven past him, and he knew he was on the outer edge of a tornado that higher up the mountains was leaving many a barren waste where giants of the wood had stood for ages. Dashes of rain touched him at times, but there was no steady fall. At times it seemed as if the showers had been dipped by the wind from the river, and above and beyond him the mountains were roaring.

From the bluff above High-Low he saw the settlement half under water, great trees turning and tossing where the road had been; and a few men on improvised rafts were on exploring expeditions among the jam.

The people were so terror-stricken that few noticed the advent of a stranger. Some people were missing, and for them search was being made. One shanty had been swept clear off the ground, and was lodged intact between two trees locked together by their entwined tops. From its one window a woman was shrieking, and Clevents, who was trying to get to her, felt suddenly the weight of another body on his raft of lashed logs, and the help of an added oar or pole as the craft was guided straight to its destination by a hand stronger than his. Turning, he saw the intense dark face and the garb of the priest.

"You have come?"

"You are the man?"

No other words were exchanged; but the priest held the raft steady while Clevents, with scant gallantry, got the woman—one of the objectionable half-breeds—through the window and reached the wet land once more, to the grins and delight of her many friends. A certain air of distinction surrounded her because of being rescued by a priest and the most fastidious ranger in the diggings.

The two "family ladies" watched the rescue from the safe pinnacle of their own bluff, and took turns in looking through a field-glass at the picturesque form of Father Henri that stood out definitely among the rest. They saw Clevents hold out his hand as if in some pledge, and after a little bit the tall native clasped it, and pointed with the other across the creek where the trail led to the north and west.

But Clevents shook his head.

"You are right, I think; that is the direction, but the force of the Columbia has dammed up this creek so that one can't cross for hours to come."

"Once I knew every trail of the hills, with water-courses full or empty. I may not have forgotten the path to her nest," said the priest, quietly.

Clevnts glanced at him from under his wide hat, wondering just how deep was the churchman's interest in the little squaw—the haste in which the letter had been answered surprised him; but the calm dark face of Henri Mercier was as a mask. Clevents scarcely knew how to speak to him of the stray up there, but said, in some embarrassment:

"Then you know her hiding-place? I was told you brought her back to her people once before when she was living like that. I must say I find it hard to think evil of that girl; she seems so fit for better things that I felt it a sort of duty to send for you."

"If any say the child lived in sin that other time when I found her, they speak falsely," returned the other; "if she is as clean of soul now—"

But his voice was not so steady as before, and he did not finish the sentence. At his feet lay something black, washed there on the waters; he stooped and picked it up—a little black cross. After a little he said:

"Will you, before I go to her, tell me what you can? It is not so long a time since I was here, yet much has happened. You gambled for her—you won her—a human life—then what?"

Mr. Clevents' usually audacious eyes wavered before the uncompromising gaze of the younger man.

"Then? Not much of anything, so far as I was concerned. But come where we can get a bite to eat, there we can talk; and then I'll go with you, if you'll have me."

The priest hesitated. He had halted but because of the flood of back-water and the calls of frightened women. He had even a fear that she might be among them; but now that she was not, the minutes of delay were as hours.

"Well, whatever you can do, I don't intend to take the trail without some breakfast first. I've got a cook to be proud of, and I don't think the water reached his supply; and while we are eating, Élouise may come into camp. She hasn't been here for days; and if she's on high ground, she's likely to have seen that cloud-burst, or whatever it was. This is Redney's time up, and she will more than likely be anxious about him."

"Redney?"

"The only person, I believe, who knows all about her and who is with her, but he won't tell—a square sort of a young half-breed who has charge of a portage gang from Farwell."

"He is yonder but a little ways," said the priest, "if

their boats are not caught in the storm of wind and water. He knew me, and offered to be my messenger to Élouise; but I came—”

Close to where they walked a woman was crouched against the wall of a shed. Wet and sodden though her garments, she seemed half-asleep, but aroused enough to blink up at the two men, who passed on, not noting her.

“Message to Élouise,” she whispered in maudlin fashion—“message—I will see where stops. Ho, ho, Henri of the black gown! You hunt for the squaws and no pay the money? I see—”

She staggered to her feet and followed slowly. She heard a man’s voice say, “Here is the princess, ladies; your curiosity can now be satisfied,” and stopping, she looked toward the speaker.

He was laughing, and two white women, pretty and young, gazed at her in wonder.

“You are only teasing us,” said one of them; “that is never the famed Mestina, who sat in council—a princess.”

The Indian woman heard, and smiled vacantly.

“Mestina—me,” she assented. “Princess poor, miserable, wet; no *lum*—no *chickamin*; sorry princess.”

“And a sorry one you look,” retorted Ewing. “Have you no more children to sell and buy rum with?”

His wife touched him on the arm, for in his disgust he had blurted out more than he had intended, and Miss Della’s eyes were very wide with wonder; but the representative of Indian royalty answered mournfully:

“No—none; so Mestina’s heart is sad. Got *lum* for poor—sick?”

But the spirit of sympathy was not abroad in the land that morning, and for the lack of it La Mestina stood like a whimpering statue of desolation for many minutes after the others walked away from her. She knew she was weak

and thirsty, but did not know the weakness was from starving. She wanted rum. She even seemed to forget her first intention of following the black gown, and relapsed once more into an attitude of ease, if not of grace, and made a couch of a slanting slab. There, heedless of the destruction about her, and the turmoil caused by the banking up of waters—there, freed from the carking cares of property owners, she slept the sleep of the guiltless through the added hours, until the noon divided the day, and the wandering ones from the upper mines came straggling in with stories of how the tornado or cloud-burst had appeared from different points of view; for the rainfall was conceded to be but a local affair, and there were peaks west and north on which the sun had never ceased shining.

“Talk about the quick storms and changes of the tropics,” growled one of the discontented—“they’d have to hustle some to keep up with the break the Columbia made this morning; wonder if it’s true that the portage gang are washed down with it?”

“No—only one boat swamped, and one owned by the stranger that just set up the drinks. He’s bitter on that priest for not lending a hand to hold the plunder, but you don’t see the black gowns exercise their muscles much.”

“Who—Brother Henri?” remarked one of the Selkirk men, with a grim smile. “Well, don’t you ever grow reckless and banter him, or you’ll learn your mistake. He’s a *skookum*, you bet.”

“Wonder if he’s trying to convert Clevents?”

“Say, who’s that packin’ truck through the scrub-oaks?”

They forgot their gossip to watch the man with the truck, and saw there were two of them—Redney and one of his helpers; and the stuff they carried was the mail and express packages that were deemed of too much value to

leave back with the outfit anchored among the trees, high above the usual lines of the Columbia.

The first face that met the young messenger as he entered Antoine's door was that of the dauntless stranger who had joined the gang at Farwell.

"Well, my young friend, the river was no more friendly than yourself, but I got here just the same," he said, airily.

Men were gathering in to ask about mail, and none noticed that Redney had no reply to make. Clevents came in on hearing the mail had arrived, and the priest was with him. Each had been watching closely the back-water of the creek that had been steadily falling now for two hours; one more, and to cross it would not be impossible, and the nearer route to Thunder Mountain could be entered upon, and in the end be reached just as soon as by the other possible, but almost impassible, course.

Father Henri spoke kindly, but in reserved fashion, to the several who pressed forward to renew acquaintance, and to Antoine's attempted gossip of Élouise he gave no encouragement.

"I have come from sick bodies in the flat-lands, and am going to a sick soul in the hills," he said; "that is enough for you to know, Antoine. If the time comes when I can remain among you, I will ask you of all the trouble, but not to-day."

And Antoine smiled his content, and offered some red wine to the priest in memory of the days when he was not a priest, but only a little Indian carrying traps along the valley. But once the clerical back was turned, his dissatisfaction was outspoken.

"You come here to remain a citizen?" he asked the stranger, who was getting acquainted by distributing drinks. "Then take by me a little of advice—me who did help first to make the town that did arrive at this camp. Keep wide

from the track of the red-feet, even though they are highest of the church. They remember no favor and no friend. There is this one—so often has he eaten of my bread, but turns like a stranger if I but ask one little civil thing, and for a squaw who was as his sister, and who lives now in the shameful sin; even she he cares nothing to bring back to the church—so quick do they forget. Though,” he added, truly enough, “when a squaw turns bad—if that is what the young one is—it is waste breath for the man who tries to convert them to good again; and if she is not bad, would she shun all people and live alone in the mountain? Even a squaw that is old will not do that. You, now, Mestare Harty, a gentleman that has traveled wide, you will have known enough of them for that.”

“Harte—my name is Harte,” explained his listener; “but a hearty name, too—ha! ha! Yes, sir, you’re right. The curse of the country are these degraded reds. The missions make a big bluff toward civilizing them, but what use is it? That’s what I want to know, gentlemen—what use it? Do the best they can, and a Siwash remains a Siwash, and a squaw is naturally a low piece of God’s creation. They can teach them the catechism, but they can’t keep them away from the white men’s camps.”

“Especially if they’re half-starved and scent a square meal,” remarked a joker in the crowd.

“Right you are, and we’ll just drink on that. And they tell me there is one miner has his wife up here from the States. Now that’s a thing I couldn’t make up my mind to do—let a white woman, and a lady, see the way these degraded squaws live; so my wife lives on our ranch down in Washington when I take a notion to ride the line outside civilization.”

“If I don’t miss my guess, I run across you in the 70’s down in the Walla Walla country,” said a sharp-visaged

veteran who had been watching the speaker lazily; "but if you're the chap, your scalp-lock hadn't so much white in it, and you could cover all the ranches you owned then with your two feet."

The other looked nettled for an instant, and then joined in the smile that was popular at that moment.

"I'm the chap," he agreed, "and a reckless devil-may-care I was, to boot. No, I hadn't caught up with luck then, and real estate wasn't worth much in my eyes, but the white scalp-lock has changed that."

"And turned you on the reds, too," insinuated the veteran.

The man from Washington gave a longer, keener look at the lazy face of the man, but it was blandly innocent of all double intent, and he answered decidedly:

"Yes, sir, it did; and if I make a business stand in any part of the country, my first move would be to clear the ground of such cattle. They keep decent women away, and one of them—one squaw—will demoralize more men than—"

And then a couple of men near the door began to laugh, and a living indorsement of Mr. Harte's words dragged herself in from the road and stood drowsy and stupid among the men.

It was the princess, and Redney, who had hated her faithfully for many moons, was so close behind her as to have the appearance of an escort to the slouchy squaw; in fact, she turned to him and said:

"Where? Who waits here for La Mestina? Damn! Devil! You lie like dog—or white man."

He did not reply. His eyes were too busy watching the prosperous, public-spirited gentleman from Washington, and *he* was gazing in utter disgust at the unkempt creature whose hair fell over her face.

"Here's a living example," he began; but a scream from the squaw stopped him. The hair was flung from her eyes, and she stood like one suddenly awakened, and trembling visibly.

"Jimjams," remarked one.

"Redney, I thought you didn't deal in that sort of stock," laughed another; but the boy said nothing. He was smiling in an ugly way at the expression on the face of the stranger as the Indian woman moved toward him.

"Rubee," she said, softly, with a little laugh—a strange, blood-chilling laugh—"Rubee, all the day I wait and cry—cry, but no—no more. You come at night time all same to rest, and now—now—"

She looked about again as if bewildered. The men watched her in wonder. No one among them had ever heard the tones in which she spoke, though they had heard her voice in oath and in wrangle for many seasons along the Columbia.

But all the unusual gentleness of it did not reassure the stranger. His face whitened as she moved nearer to him, with one hand outstretched, as one who asks alms.

"Go away!" he muttered, hoarsely. "What the devil does she mean? Take her away, some of you, or by God—"

The sweat broke on his forehead, and his hand clenched threateningly. He looked like a man who sees a ghost; and she did not seem quite real to any of them—not natural, at all events. And not a man moved except Redney, and his revolver was suddenly leveled at the clenched hand.

"What is it to you?" demanded the man, aroused to the fact that the boy had an active antagonism toward him, instead of a merely passive sulkiness. But he dropped his hand.

The Indian woman had cowered before it and the horror of his face, but only for a moment, and then she smiled in a vacant, horrible way.

"Rubee," she grunted, and turned around once, twice, with a blind, groping movement—"Rubee!"

And then she fell to the floor, as Élouise had spoken of her falling long before when she realized that she was deserted. But this time it was only the body that fell; the breath of life had left her with his uttered name.

Redney turned the sodden face, with its wide-open eyes, up to the gaze of all, and more than one man drew back shuddering at the picture, and reached for the whisky-bottle.

His touch was not particularly gentle; a smothered rage seemed to vibrate through gesture and voice.

"You're in luck," he said, insolently, to the stranger, who stood moveless and pallid. "Here's a first-class specimen of depravity for you to lecture about and guard your decent women from. But, while you're about it, couldn't you say a word or so of truth for the beasts like yourself who make these poor devils what they are?"

"Hold on, little one," said one of the men, laying a warning hand on his shoulder. "Men have to swallow lead for less than that sometimes."

"And he'll have to swallow either that or his words," added the stranger, who was more self-reliant when dealing with a man than with the dead wretch on the floor. "You're a damned insolent young cur, anyway."

Redney looked at him very coolly, very contemptuously.

"I couldn't well be anything better considering the low dog of a father you gave me. Now, curse you, if you've got anything to say back to that, say it."

But he did not seem to have anything to say. His face flushed scarlet and then faded, leaving him with a strange

white look about the lips. The bold, black eyes met those of the boy with a keen scrutiny that ended in his drawing his empty hand from his hip-pocket, and trying to smile with his natural air of bravado, as if the temper of the youth, like the craziness of the squaw, was beneath a man's notice.

But in looking from the dead face on the floor to the living face above, the smile died out, and, without a word, he turned away.

And Redney's eyes, with something like a bit of a tiny blaze showing in each of them, watched him go out through the side door by which Élouise had fled that night not so very long ago.

CHAPTER XXI.

ABOVE THE CLOUDS.

WITH the faint dawn-light Élouise had arisen and made her fire of dry sticks where the fish were to bake. The sign of sleepless nights had fallen over her dark, heavy eyes, a lassitude unusual bound her young limbs, and standing there looking across to the east where the dim curtain of day was lifting up, she seemed strangely old compared with the impetuous young savage who had flung the cross away and bound on her breast the token of the pagan.

Perhaps it had through all those fearful, happy weeks shielded her from the evil she had begged for help against; but there had arisen others, soul-disturbing, against which

the charm had no potency. Would the cross have had? She did not know; she did not regret. Her life had been lived in the light of his eyes for all those weeks. Dearest happiness than that she had not prayed for; but a something un-Indian in her nature was making her pay a mental penalty, and the stings of dread it brought her were keen as the cut of a scourge. Not the rustle of a leaf, or flutter of a bird in the brush, but that she feared it was some step of fate that would bear the truth to him. She was living only from hour to hour, from day to day.

Of the future her forebodings were so sad that she dared not attempt to sing. When he asked, she said always "No," for in her memory was one legend of a singer of the past who in the improvising of song from his thoughts had, forgetful of listeners, confessed a crime for which he was given death.

Not that she feared death—only the scorn of the living.

When she turned, he stood close beside her; he was growing stealthy as herself in all movements, for the sight of her constant watchfulness had taught him caution.

"My young eagle," he said, fondly, "do you never sleep? for I always find you up and awaiting the day. Are you trying to steal the daybreak songs of the birds?"

"I am listening to the sounds in the ice mountains," she answered, and pointed where the glaciers of the Selkirks were yet hidden in fog. "Strange noises are there—it is from the hot sun; and rains are coming across there soon, and that will be bad for canoes on the river."

"I have seen no signs of rain. Do the birds and the fishes tell you these things?"

"No; but about the peaks over there little clouds have been coming. They gather and gather like that, then they drift up and out as the wind blows, and they always carry rain, sometimes more than rain, for the little winds go

around and around the bowls of the mountains until they roar and grow strong, then they break loose; and the whites call them the tornado."

He smiled as she talked. Her speech was less brief than when his life had commenced in her retreat. He seldom heard her use now the Chinook words—only when he asked to be taught their meanings.

"How wise you are in knowledge of the origin of all phenomena of the hills," he said, caressingly. "If only you would give half as much thought to the human things on them."

"I do think much—I do what I can," and she turned wearily away. "And this day I must go to the people down there. The finished work must be taken; it is all done now. If Redney is there, it will give us the money to buy a boat; it will buy you the way toward the sea; then you will not say I do not think of you. You say that many times; you will soon say it no more."

He checked her as she tried to pass him; barring her way with one arm, he touched her shoulder with the other hand ere she eluded him.

"Do not leave me to-day," he said, suddenly.

"And why so? You are strong now; you do not need me."

"I shall always need you, *opitsah*" (sweetheart), he answered, with eyes tender as his words; and to-day—well, it's only a fancy, I suppose, but I dreamed of losing you last night. I awoke myself trying to call you. The dream seemed so real that I had to come out and see you, hear you speak; but the dread stays with me. Do you understand? It is like the signs of the storms over there; it makes me afraid. Do not leave me."

"I will get your breakfast, and you tell me of the dream," she said, as if hearing none of the tender tones of his

speech. "May be it is well for me to stop here to-day. It would be bad if a storm should come that would keep me in the valley. But tell me what you thought in your sleep."

Lines of sulphurous yellow were ranging themselves along the sky in the far east, and above them the whitish banks of clouds, that soon dropped down to meet the mists of the valleys. Only for a few minutes did the lurid light show itself threateningly, and left only the moist gray dawn within range of their vision.

It was an unusual thing for them to talk in the dawning—he seldom saw her until sunrise; and they looked strangely at each other as they sat watching the fish cook; then he laughed.

"We look like some witch and wizard at some incantation scene, before the day is awake to watch us. I feel as people do when waiting for a journey that is to be made—an unsettled feeling. I wonder what it is we are both out here waiting for this morning."

"You did not yet tell me of the dream," she answered.

"Oh, it was not a long dream, only I thought you were a bird, and I saw you fly away, and was not troubled about it until, suddenly, a dark wall rose up and shut you out of sight. I could not even see the blue sky or the white clouds where you had been; and when I thought you were gone forever, I fell on my face in the darkness, and called, and called, but you would not answer. When I wakened, I was still trying to call you, and there were tears on my face, and I was trembling and sick at heart."

"I can not see far into dreams," she said, thoughtfully, "but I will not go far from you to-day. Mestina could tell you all the meanings of dreams, so they called her wise."

"She could not have told the meaning of many when I saw her last."

"No," agreed the girl; "her life has run so far wrong.

Do you know how the trees bend crooked when they are hewed near to the heart? People turn like that sometimes, so I think. They grow straight, may be, for years, and then the sorrow, or the evil, touches the heart, and their life is crooked from that until the grave."

"Sometimes I wish you could have schools, like the daughters of white people," he said, "just to see how you might have grown under cultivation; and then the fear that they might have robbed you of your naturalness by their pattern system makes me glad every time you speak that the mountains were your only teachers."

She dropped her head in her hands, and the un-Indian sound of a sob came to his ears.

"Do not—be so kind in your—words," she muttered, whisperingly; "in my heart is a pain when you speak. I am better alone or in your silence."

He reached out his hand pleadingly, and was about to speak, when she sprung to her feet, with her hand raised and a caution to silence on her lips.

She seemed listening intently, but he could hear nothing, and, wordless, watched her face that was paler than he had ever noticed it; and on her lashes the tears shone tremulously.

After a little the dim sounds came to his ears too, sounds like muffled thunder, and sharp reports breaking through it. Masses of clouds drifted before them, and hid from their sight whatever it was that roared and surged between the ranges. A mighty tempest seemed raging so short a distance away, and its coming had been swift as the wind. Clouds rolled to their feet and almost hid their faces from each other; birds flew with frightened cries to their shelter under the terrace; things unseen rustled and fled through the brush so close about them, and over and above all else

was that mighty cloud-draped force with the wind-shrieks driving it onward.

Instinctively those two moved closer. Death was surely sweeping across their path. Each face was white in that strangest of all mornings, as he reached his hands to her, and her own met them.

With the end of life ends the rule of the world and its barriers, and the end of life had surely come to them; and as he drew her close, all disguises were ended for Élouise.

They sunk to the ground as the wind struck them—not thrown by the force, but staggering through the enveloping cloud to a nook of shelter. The pebbles and sand of the mountain cut in their faces until he drew hers close to his own. They dared not open their eyes, for the wind that had only bent the tree-tops in the valley surged and broke against the high walls of the hills. Not a drop of rain came to them, only the terrific rage of the wind shrieking and storming at their fortress of shelter.

And through it all he held her, unresisting, in his arms; though winning no word from her, he whispered again and again fond words, fond names, and touched her with his lips. She moved shiveringly in his embrace, but opening her eyes on the dread gray walls that closed down like a tomb and would scarce let her see his face, she turned to him with a helpless moan that was smothered by his mouth pressed against her own.

Away below in the valley a deluge was descending into the Columbia and its tributaries for a mile on either side; and the tempest of wind was making strange twists and curves along the range—now darting down and leveling all it touched, and then rising triumphant from the spoils, would merely touch the tops of the trees for miles. But about the summit of the ancient hill of refuge the clouds

pressed, black, moving, shifting, but forgotten by the hurrying winds.

And those two, drawn to each other more closely by the threatening dangers than they had ever been by the uneventful security of their days, heard, as in a trance, the roar of the tornado pass away through echoing gulches, growing fainter and fainter in the distance, but leaving that thick gray canopy about them.

Whether it was minutes or hours that passed, they could not have told, for time had halted under the dense cover they had thought was a shroud; but when it lifted at last, it did so as quickly as it had fallen, and by the wings of the wind the great billows were swept aside, and the sun high in the heavens shone down mercilessly on their entwined arms.

She drew away, with a mingled cry of shame, contrition, and accusation.

"Élouise!" he begged, reproachfully, "come back. Do not look at me like that. What difference does the sunlight make? You are mine now through all the days, all the nights. Come!"

But the lips that had softened under his kisses were firm as a drawn bow. She had dreamed a sweet dream with the hope of death to follow, but awoke to the light of the sun and to judgment of herself.

"No! no! no!" she moaned, staggering back from him; "do not touch, do not follow. You will hate me much, may be, when that sun shines again—when I tell to you—"

But she could not say it. He met her strange gaze, passionate yet pathetic, for an instant, and then she vanished quickly as the clouds had gone; and, call as he might, she would not return. Whatever battles of the heart or conscience she had to fight, she had taken to the lonely places of the mountain.

CHAPTER XXII.

HENRI MERCIER.

LEFT alone, he was restless and uneasy. Would she come back, or would she, remembering again the night he had sold her, pit that memory against the love she had proven, and in revenge leave him there to starve if he might? He had heard of Indian natures puzzling in their methods of vengeance; and surely, of all inexplicable Indians, this fond, yet repellant, young savage was the most so.

He watched the sun pick out other peaks from the changing clouds, and wondered if the settlement near the river had been swept as the hills had; if so, none of it would be left, for all along the mountain-side the timber was torn out by the roots and twisted off many feet from the ground.

If Élouise had attempted that trip down the mountain, she would have been crushed to death, and the thought coming to him brought a swift horror to his heart—if he should lose her!

He did not dare tell himself yet that perhaps he had lost her. The memory of her final surrender, of her wordless acknowledgment of love as she lay in his arms, was too sweet a victory to spoil by forebodings of evil. Being a strange, wild creature, she had fled as a bird from the cage of his arms; but even the bird returns to the prison of the hand it loves, and so would Élouise return—he was so sure, so sure!

And when she did, how effectually he would quell those absurd fears of hers that he might ever hate her—as if that could be possible!

She did not seem so much like a weird little witch to him now as she did before, despite the uncanny surroundings to their love-making. She was only a foolish little girl who adored him and who was ashamed of having confessed it.

So thinking, he took up the task she had left unfinished, that of preparing breakfast. Convulsions of nature or of the spirit may for awhile drown forgetfulness of meal-time, but not for long; and the sun falling westward from the center of the sky told him that the noon was past.

He gathered sticks and replaced the fire blown into the little rift by the storm, and at every turn, coming and going, he looked and listened for steps of the young savage. He even went to that sheer wall under the grotto of the altar, remembering her former threat, but neither dead nor living Elouise lay at its base.

He nervously began to dread remaining alone in their home under the cliff. Shadows of lives that had been seemed to fill every nook and corner. His fancy, despite himself, would wander to the weird legends of the people who had lived there ages ago. The dead nation that ruled in the land had sung its triumphs from these heights, and held as sacred the weak, the penitent, and the outlaw who fled to the fortress above; and of all their sovereign glories nothing remained, and only one little semi-pagan, semi-christian lived of this generation as heir to their blood and their spirit.

Was it so strange to wonder if they would not guard or avenge her? He arose impatiently at the thought; it annoyed him and made him glance quickly over his shoulder at a sound as of something creeping through the leaves toward him. But he could see nothing.

The sun was almost down. That thought of the hosts of the savage dead ranging themselves against him was horrible; he could not get it out of his mind, yet he told himself

again and again there would be nothing to avenge. Why should there be? He was too fond of her to treat her basely, or—

Again he turned at that sound—a strange, dragging sound back of him—and saw, but a few feet away, the slow coiling of a snake with its flat head thrust forward and moving oddly from side to side.

Not a thing was near to defend himself with—everything of wood was blown away by the wind; but springing back beyond the length of it, he found in the brush a long wattle of oak, from which he stripped leaves and branches.

The reptile seemed to fly at him as he returned, but being beyond its reach, he struck it just back of the head as it was coiling for a second attack.

Its neck was broken by the stroke, but the way it thrashed the ground in its ceaseless writhings showed so much vitality that he felt in no way secure until he had found a stone with which to finish its death.

It was the first snake he had ever seen up there, and had no idea of its kind; it had no doubt fled from below in the tempest.

But wherever it came from, the blood or the poison from it sickened him. He moved away, turning his face in the direction the fresh wind was coming, and bending his head in his hands sat down, feeling dizzy and disgusted—the horrid black coil there had made him ridiculously nervous. If only Élouise would come and free him from the suspense, the loneliness, that the coming of that serpent had only intensified. It had crept into their retreat like a warning of evil to their Eden.

Lifting his eyes to look again at the dead foe, he arose slowly to his feet in a breathless sort of wonder, for standing over the snake, like a suddenly materialized spirit, was the somber, dark figure of the Indian priest.

Not a sound had betrayed his coming; in fact, Dunbar had an idea he must have been there a long time, invisible. The snake, yet moving, touched his feet, but he did not bend even a glance to it. His eyes were fixed in mute question on the surprised man who faced him, a tall, full-bearded, rather pale-faced man, whom few would have ever recognized as "Gentleman Neil."

But after his first moment of doubt as to whether it was an apparition or a man, Dunbar knew, and flushed slightly at the thought, that it was no other than the Henri whom she had always loved best—who had been her friend and champion, but whose kindness of visage was marred by the set, stern mouth and the deep wrinkle between the eyes. He was the first to speak.

"You—live here, stranger?"

Dunbar grew stronger at the words, since the priest did not seem to know whom he was addressing.

"Yes, it's a summer resort of mine," he answered, easily; "rather high for the average ranger. Barring that creature, you are my first visitor."

"You live alone?"

"Well, yes; my family is rather limited."

"And Élouise—where is she?"

"Who? Why—"

"Do not be false!" and the priest's voice had a ring of command instead of entreaty. "The track of her moccasin is in the wet sand by the stream, and that is not the work of a white man."

The thing pointed to was the deer-skin hunting-dress, with its fringed and beaded trimmings. He had, in sheer loneliness, brought it out from the dwelling, cutting over any of the fringe admitting of it, and admiring the fancy bit of Indian work which he supposed would soon be carried away south by that lucky lady. One of the tiny moc-

casins, with a blood-red heart on the toe, lay clear of the rest, and spoke loudly against him. He stood sullenly still.

"Somewhere on the mountain she is hidden; where it is you must tell me," continued the other, quietly. "I am here to take her away."

"No! that you shall not do," he began, angrily; and then, checking himself, added, "that is, against her will. But if she wanted to go to you, wouldn't she do that without you coming after her?"

The priest seemed stung with the truth in the words, and the taunt in them.

"But if it is that she is kept by fear—by force?"

"Was she ever afraid?" asked Dunbar, more quietly. "Your wanting to know about her is all right, of course. She has told me of you. But you must not think she is here unwillingly. You will only make her unhappy by coming, and she is better contented than in the settlement down there; let her be."

The softened intonation of the speaker made the priest look at him more keenly. He had dealt with rough men most of his life, but knew that this man did not belong to the uncouth, however he might appear an outcast, possibly a renegade.

"She is—your wife?" he asked, suddenly, and his lips scarcely moved with the question; but Dunbar, after a moment's hesitation, shook his head.

"Why, no; a man can't marry every little squaw who cooks his meat, you know."

"Élouise is different from many squaws you may have known," returned the priest, with a chill sort of patience. "She must keep the lodge of but one man. She is a child in heart, but we are men; men must think for children and the old people. She lives with you here alone, and your heart turns to her?"

"She has been here—yes."

The priest looked at him for an answer to the other question—looked at him so long, so sternly, that Dunbar felt the red waves flushing up to his hair. He strove to return glances defiant, but failed; and the other, with a long breath, as of a man half-strangled, held up his hand for silence.

"Tell me no words," he said. "But she is of my people; she was meant for the holy church—so it would have been. If you have robbed the church of her life, claimed her for the world, you must pay the world's price. I have come for that; so it must be."

"The price? My God! would you be willing to sell her, as her mother was to gamble her away? Is that your friendship for your people, the teaching of your holy church? Well, my wealth is shadowy just now; but if promissory notes will be taken, we may settle this family matter amicably," and Dunbar's contempt was very apparent in his speech. "I'd be willing to give a good deal and be rid of you before she gets back; before she knows that you can be as grasping for money as the old princess herself."

"The old princess is dead. Let the dead rest—if they can! Her body, dying this morning, was only a part of death; her soul died so many years ago, killed by a man perhaps like you."

"Well, you are cursedly impertinent, anyway," retorted Dunbar, angrily; "and imaginative, too. The certainty of old Mestina ever having possessed a soul is doubtful; if so, it must have been donated by the devil. But that has nothing to do with Élouise; and what is the price you have settled on, and to whom am I to pay it?"

The contemptuous query was made in mere curiosity. He had no idea of really buying Élouise. Was she not his

by more than the will of her tribe? But no man who has lived in the forests of that north country is surprised, even at this day, to hear of a squaw sold for money. He had expected something different from this priest he had heard much of. Yet, after all, he was only an Indian.

"Come, now, the price?" he repeated.

"Your name, and the payment to be made to her—Élouise."

"Well, by God!"

"By the God it shall be," affirmed the other, quietly. "Marriage ordained of him must not be desecrated by his children. Men far in the wilderness live lives unpleasing in the eyes of heaven often, and thoughtlessly so, but when the church, in her priests, seeks them as bearers of the sacrament, then surely must the clean-hearted be thankful. So I am come to you, by the help of the saints, in the name of Christ crucified."

Dunbar recoiled before the burning eyes of the zealot, whose expression had something exalted in it. Doubts of the man's sanity flashed through his mind.

"You are surely not serious," he said, at last, in a pacific tone. "Élouise can choose her own life, as other women have done. If she chooses to remain with me, she shall not be sorry. But more than that I can not promise; and to marry, actually marry, a squaw is more than any man must ask of me."

"Will you find a better heart and soul among your white women?"

"No," he answered, frankly enough; "she is devoted to—her friends. But you, though priest, see enough of the world to know that white men owe a duty to their own race when they pick their wives, and their race does not approve of Indians in their families."

"My mother was an Indian, my father was a good man;

he married her," said the priest, with that strange patience he had shown from the first.

"Oh, well, but he was a hunter, living with her tribe. I will hardly live such a life."

"I have asked you not what you are, nor how you live. From your speech, you perhaps belong to some family that is proud. You see I understand? Well, I will tell you, if it is of ancient birth, of ruling blood, in all the land there lives none this day with the sovereign pedigree of that child, who knows not their value in the white man's land. It is no slave I ask you to take. If she were dowered as a princess of your world is dowered, she would be equal in race and tribe with any, if only by her Indian blood. The white blood of the father may be unclean—it is often so; but you can lead her away where she can forget the evil he brought to them. As a wife she—"

"See here," interrupted Dunbar, "I believe all you say. Your intentions are good enough, but it's no use. Fond as I am of her, I can't and won't marry an Indian. I'd die first."

The priest nodded his head, so keenly intent in his quest that he did not hear a choking sound from above their heads, where the ledge jutted over like a roof, or, if he had, might have thought it his gambling friend coming closer at the sound of raised voices.

"Listen!" he urged, appealingly. "You say she is devoted to her friends; how much more devoted, then, has she shown herself to you when she forgets them all for your words. She is only a child, a pure one at heart when I knew her last. Could you spoil all that by making her life like the life of her mother? Her life is yours to make or unmake. I know that in my heart, else she would not live here where you live. Her soul has been as a white flower opening above swamps where the poison is. Like the

eaglets, whose nest she shared once, she has lived above the levels of evil. We must keep her so—you, the man she turns to, and I—”

He stopped uncertainly, and clasped with his fingers the crucifix. Was there anything more to say? He had said so much, so many words, persistent yet not hopeful words, for the man before him seemed to congeal with each added plea.

“Good God!” he broke out, “you talk as though I would be a brute to her! I! Why, man—but what use is there in telling you, a priest? Priests do not understand loves of men and women; so leave us alone.”

“I will do so,” he answered, with calm significance. I came to give her to you in marriage if your minds turned toward each other; but if you say no, then I will leave you much alone, for I will take her away. Will you bring her to me for marriage?”

He put the question as though it were final, and Dunbar’s lips straightened angrily.

“No! I won’t be bullied into promising anything, and that’s all there is of it,” he declared. “We will get along better without your interference than with it; but to talk of taking her from me is foolish,” and in spite of himself, the note of triumph would ring through his speech. “You will never make her leave me while I live.”

The priest’s hat dropped to the ground; he raised his hand, making the sign of the cross in the air, and seeming in Dunbar’s eyes to suddenly loom up taller, more imposing, and with as terrible a light in his eyes as had belonged to the dead serpent at his feet.

“The time that you live will be short,” he said, and the slow concentration of the tone was chilling. “Think of prayer, think of God! Of your sins, I absolve you! Of your blood, be it on my head!”

And then, as a panther springs on its prey, so he hurled himself on the other, who went down under the blow as the brittle trees in the leveling wind.

Dunbar reached for a knife, but the circling fingers on his throat rendered him powerless. In the dark, vengeful face of the priest—a face all Indian now—he read the uselessness of a hope for mercy. Death lurking in those strong dark fingers turned all the sky a narrowing dome of crimson in his starting eyes, and that face above him but a darker blot of blood, and then he knew no more.

Of that low cry from the shelf of the ledge and the form of the girl darting from her hiding-place, of the sudden crashing through the brush and the horror-stricken exposition of Clevents, the man on the ground was past hearing, and the man above past heeding.

Élouise clung to the priest's hands, moaning, "*Henri! Henri!*" while Clevents, with what words and what muscle he could, was striving to draw him from the thing that seemed only a lifeless body.

"Henri, hear!" and the girl raised herself, facing him, on her knees, and whipping from her blouse the knife Clevents had seen her use before—"let him go, or I, Élouise, I who love you, will die with him. You will kill us both."

He saw the knife raised to her throat, the point even touched the soft neck, when he caught her hands and wrested the knife from her.

She let it go without effort, and dropped moaning on the still form before her, shielding the neck, livid-striped, with her own face.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ÉLOUISE.

CLEVENTS, wordless, stepped back, watching the strange actors in the drama of the Indian refuge. He had not heard the words of the two men, having halted too far off. The girl he had not seen at all until the men were on the ground, but she had evidently seen their approach and crept close in their wake; and the priest, looking down on the girl with an indescribable expression on his face, had filled his mind with strange conjectures and a good deal of amazement.

He was again as still, as undemonstrative, as he had been since Clevents' first meeting with him. The creature of passion, who had for those moments clung with such diabolical tenacity to the other man's throat, had faded again into the character more fitting to the garb he wore, and listened with cold face to the low moaning breaths of the girl who bent in such intense question over Dunbar.

"Is it then so, oh, Élouise?" he asked in their own language. "Is it so that the pride of the eagle's heart is lowered to the carrion toward which the foul birds fly? Has the soul of your race died within you at the words of a stranger? Had you never a blade for your own breast ere your heart grew weak? For I, who led you to the baptism of the holy church, would have dug the grave for your body and sung triumph songs sooner than see you bowed with the shame of your life."

She turned one pleading, deprecating glance to him.

"You do not know," she answered in English; that was

all—a vibrating, pathetic suggestion in the words that thrilled Clevents, though he could say nothing. He felt barred away from her by those two men.

But a little cry from her brought him nearer.

“He has breath! he is living!” she said, and drew back a little.

It was true; the tremulous lids of the eyes, and the slight gasping breath growing stronger with each effort, showed that the Indian priest had at least stopped short of murder; but he did not seem particularly interested in the fact. It was Clevents who carried water in his hands and dashed it in the man’s face, and from a pocket-flask poured whisky between his teeth, looking at him all the time in a puzzled, scrutinizing way.

As for the girl, despite her despair at his fancied death, she arose from his side with little of joy in her face and turned to the priest.

He saw all the sadness of her eyes and the heart-breaking tremble of the childish lips, but above all that a something in expression that made the young face look strange to him; a fateful force that vibrated through her voice and made her words slower, firmer, when she said:

“The man is to live, Henri; he—the man you would kill for wrong that is not his. If breath had gone away from him always, I, Élouise, would have let you go to your grave and heard no word from me; but now I say to you the deed was wrong which you did. I heard your words together—some of them. I crept there when you looked at the beads on the deer-skin. The man who is there has suffered much at my hand. Why should you too hunt him? And marry? When did you ever before think Élouise would be squaw for the white men who climb to our mountains? While you kill, kill two, for I also say ‘no’ when you talk of marriage.”

“Then you—Élouise—have no love in your thoughts?”

began the priest in troubled wonder; but the girl uttered a short, hard laugh.

"Ask of the man who crept to this peak with you," she returned, grimly. "He can tell you, may be, what love I had."

But the priest did not understand; his eyes, in sad scrutiny, wandered from her face to her bosom, where the beak of the eagle caught his Indian eyes, and he did understand that.

"Why?" he demanded, and pointed to the pagan totem; "and the cross?"

She answered only by a passionate upward action of the hands; what use were words, explanations, now? She walked away from them all, and seated herself at the entrance to the stone dwelling in which it seemed to her she had lived so long a life, the life holding both hell and paradise in its span of one summer. The work they had completed together lay near her feet—the fine raiment for the lady, so dainty, so beautiful, who waited down there in the valley for its completion, for the worker who had wrought it—well!

She heard the first horrified utterance of Dunbar as his voice returned, and she shivered, crouching, with covered face.

"You—*you!*" he was saying, and grasped at Clevents' arm to assure himself it was no disembodied spirit bending over him. "Great God! how is this? I can't see—"

He raised on his elbow. The man who had striven to kill him stood not a rod away, indifferent and superior in manner. The serpent still showed a faint motion of life in its quivering length, and beyond it sat someone with bowed head. That must be Élouise; yes, Élouise come back—Élouise grieving for his hurts—his eagle that was yet a dove at heart.

But from the rest his gaze returned to that other.

"You are not dead—I did not kill you?" and Clevents answered with a laugh and held out his hand.

"I know you now, old fellow! Why, where on earth and why on earth have you been hiding out? Well, this is the unexpected! I never dropped to it that it was your face back of that Rip Van Winkle beard until you spoke; though you puzzled me, too. This is the queerest thing I've struck for a day or so."

"And you—didn't die?" Dunbar's hand passed over his forehead confusedly. "I feel a little dizzy and crazy. I thought you died."

"Same to you," returned Clevents. "But your head must be out of order if you've got the notion in it that you had ever killed me. You've been dreaming, old boy. Why should you kill me—and where?"

"That night, you know," and Dunbar struggled upward. "Isn't it true? My God! isn't it true? I've thought myself half-crazy over it—that night over the game—the night you drew the knife on me, and I —"

"I never drew a knife on you in my life!" asserted Clevents, hotly.

Dunbar stared at him, and unbuttoned the breast of his shirt, pushing it back. On his throat were the marks of those strong priestly fingers, but aside from them, nearer the shoulder, was the fresh scar.

"Then who?"

Clevens looked at the girl. He was about to tell, but the sight of her covered head checked him.

"I've nothing more to say," he said. "You're alive, and so am I; that's enough to think of just now. I never tried to harm you that I know of."

"But Élouise said —"

He looked toward her hesitatingly, but did not finish

the sentence. She had heard. She arose to her feet and looked Clevents in the face.

"You do right," she said, briefly, coldly. "When a sin is done, its own mouth must confess. I lied to you, to him, to everyone."

"No!" broke in the priest, and stepped to her side. "It is a madness that is speaking in her; a lie she never did tell. I stand witness."

But she raised her hand and smiled bitterly. "Not in the other summers, Henri; no, may be not. All is changed. This Élouise who speaks you never knew. I led him away from his bed in the valley. I builded a wall of lies that held him prisoner here on the mountain. I have made him suffer through all the days in this place that of old was made for peace. His heart is eaten with hunger for the people there," and she pointed to the valley, "yet he dared not go; I held him."

Dunbar smiled at her fondly, wondering what she meant. Even yet he was so confused by their many words—their contradictions. What the truth of it all was he did not know, but he trusted Élouise.

"What difference about our life here," he asked, kindly enough. "We know what it was; that is past. It is of this I asked," and he pointed to the scar. "If you know whose knife left that mark, and whose hand drove it, tell me."

From the ground she picked up the knife he had seen her use daily preparing their meals.

"There is the knife," she said in a low voice, and dropped it point downward on the rock where she stood; "and here is the hand."

"My God! *no!*" uttered Dunbar, but drawing away a step as he said it, for, meeting her eyes, he felt she did not lie. "*You, Élouise?*"

The priest looked from one to the other in perplexity.

"And this—this man who has shared your home is the man they told me you tried to kill in the camp?" he asked.

And then she turned from Dunbar's horror-stricken gaze.

"It is so," she said, in a lifeless sort of way. "He was selling me;" and the priest understood.

"Well, you had no knife ready for the princess," observed the gambler. "Was it affection held you in check there?"

She looked at him without a word, but back of the dull pain in her eyes he read something that made him feel ashamed.

"Don't mind me. I'm a harmless fool, anyway," he said, and turned to Dunbar. "Well, I'll tell the boys you're alive, Neil, for I'm going to take the home trail. This seems a family party, and I'm out of it; only"—and he looked at the girl—"I told you before I was a friend of yours, and as a student of Indian human nature, I'd just like to know if this scheme of yours was a bit of Indian vengeance in a new dress?"

Dunbar also looked at her, questioningly and coldly. She noted it, and answered:

"Yes, it was vengeance, Indian vengeance, and it is done."

Clevents had heard of an Indian proverb saying, "The arrows of vengeance poison the hand of the warrior who fits them to the bow, unless the cause be sacred."

He thought of that as she spoke. She looked as though the poisoned arrows, rebounding, had touched her heart.

"See here," he said, with characteristic abruptness, "I really won you at cards, you know, and I'm going to tell you something. If you're treated right where you want to stay, I'm out of it. I heard you say awhile ago that you didn't want to marry the man we thought you meant to," and his glance wandered to Dunbar; "and that's all right,

for nothing seems to be what we expected to find up here—the reverend and me. But if you ever need an extra gun to back you, or get what's your due out of this planet, I'm ready to turn proprietor again and square things for you. You're a squaw, but, for all the lies you own up to, I've an idea there's something whiter about you than half the ladies who have the pleasure of knowing me. I'm done."

The priest held out his hand, and the gambler, after one glance at his face, clasped it. Each understood that either would risk considerable to win content for the strange, moody child who strove for no content herself. Yet neither had ever accepted a favor from her; and a little apart, and reading their thoughts, stood the man for whom she had striven much—for whom she had cared through all those torturous days of sickness, and who felt vaguely ashamed of his own judgment of her—of his common sense—in the presence of those two sentimentalists.

"Go slowly," he said to the gambler, "and I'll join you—that is if these friends of yours don't try to massacre me again."

To the priest he had given no word or glance; but the gambler once gone, he turned his eyes shrinkingly, yet reproachfully, to Élouise.

"Is it all true?" he asked. "Was it hate made you cold to me, and revenge that made you deceive me? And he said you refused to—"

He stopped, and a great wave of conscious red flushed his face as he met her eyes.

For many suns he had been so sure she adored him, her devotion had been so complete; but something besides adoration was in the gaze she bent on him. He felt its pride and its irony. He felt that those black velvet eyes read every impulse that made him draw from her; made

him frame his speech to her with a canny regard for the opinion of her priestly champion, who stood so near.

She had called him "master," and had served him as a slave; but, with the knowledge of all her duplicity in his heart, he felt that she had risen above him, beyond him, when she spoke.

"He said I refused the wish to be wife to you," she completed; "that is so. My kinsman was told wrong. He did not know it was revenge made me guard you—so he came; but he knows now, and you need fear no more," and her tone was scornful. "It was an Indian revenge—but it is done, and my heart is tired. Go!"

What a parting after those love pledges of the morning—those kisses scarce dead on his lips! The memory of them touched him.

"You shall go too," he began, doubtfully; but she shook her head.

"Never—now," she answered, lowly. "Not for Élouise will the flowers grow there in the south by the sea, but the picture of them is in my heart, the smell of them will live with words that have been said; that is enough. *Klahowya*."

"Élouise, *opitsah!*" (sweetheart).

"*Nah!*" she cried, passionately, throwing out her hand as though the sound of the loved word hurt her; "no more *opitsah!* Squaw Élouise, slave Élouise, only. Hear! My knife sought you; my tongue lied to you; you know that—it is all you care to know of the Indian. You have suffered. Well, I will send you pay, may be. I will send from down there where the whites live a squaw who is not an Indian; who has never dug roots with her white hands; who has never had to fight with the wolf or the bear for the meat she eats; who has never, may be, lied as the Indian lies, and whose white face is there on that chain of your throat. Yes, it is she! Find her; braid in her hair

the flowers by that south sea. If you know how love is, I pay you for the knife, for the cheat, when I tell you she is down there. She waits for you—the one who will wear those red hearts on her toes—the one they call the Dell.’

“Down there! Then I *did* see her—it was no dream?”

“No dream; all the rest is, may be, not the white squaw. When the new days come, she will be the only real thing; the days left here will be the times of the evil dreams.”

Her voice, faltering, growing tremulous, made him check her as she turned.

“Élouise, I don’t seem to know you now; but I know this, that I owe you for your good care—for your nursing. Whatever your reasons, you seemed my good angel once. I do not want a harsh parting; I do not want to forget.”

She picked from the stone floor of their doorway a bit of white bark fallen there. Only the day before he had drawn on one side of it a sketch of her head, and touched it with his lips, jestingly, when she herself had drawn from his caressing arms.

“But you will forget,” she said, not looking in his face.

“But I owe you—”

“You can owe me not anything—ever,” and she turned blindly up toward the path of the terrace grotto, where so many a starlit evening had found them; and for the first time he made no attempt to follow or call her back.

He was left facing the tall, somber-eyed priest, who had listened in silence to their words. Whatever he thought was locked in his own half-savage breast. But the words of Élouise had been plain; the sin was hers alone. This man was the victim of her revenge; it was over, and he must be let go in peace, so it seemed; and however his instincts urged him to do battle for her, he pointed with an imperious gesture to the valley below, and the victim of Indian revenge bowed his head and passed out of sight.

And then Henri Mercier turned with the instincts of a hunter toward the trail of her feet; and up there she crouched by the stone altar, and felt the touch of his hand on her shoulder.

"My daughter—Élouise! Child—"

"No, not now, Henri; that child you did know has died—is dead—*aei!*"

And up the heights shivered a moan for the child-life he had known—for the heart of the woman broken by its death—and he who had uttered solace over many graves was struck dumb beside this one.

All that night—the most memorable of his life—he never left her. From some misery known only to his own heart, words at last arose to his lips, and his speech forced her to listen. With his own hands he unclasped that pagan symbol from her breast and replaced it with the cross drifted to his feet on the flood, and looking at her in the wan starlight, that change alone seemed to bring her closer to him in the bonds of their once mutual faith.

The dawn drove the night onward, and the birds were calling each other awake in the wilderness below, when he led her, unresisting, down to the doorway of her dwelling.

"Rest a little until I bring for you food," he said, gently. "Then we will go, you and I, far, where the churches are; where your days will be days of prayer and help to others. So only will your wounds be healed of the sin you have thought and done. I will not be long. You will remember your promise?"

She looked up blankly into his anxious face. "The promise?" she said.

"The promise for your life."

"Oh, yes," she assented, bitterly. "I promised not to kill myself. Well, I broke another promise to make that to you. But, if you want it—well!"

“But you promised?”

“Why should you give thought to that?” she asked, but without interest. “I said no word to you of my wish. But I promised. Go, if you like. I will seek no death; but if it comes, I will not step aside from the trail.”

He laid his hands on her head, hands trembling with the weight of his love and his fear for her; and, blessing her silently, left for the pool where the fish are.

She looked after him, and kissed the cross he had laid on her breast. He was so good; the saints in heaven could not be better, she thought, than was Henri Mercier to her. The saints take care of their own souls, but he would have lost his for her by that murder.

She did not know why he should be so kind; she had never been so kind to him. She seemed yet to feel his lips on her hands, as he had prayed with her and for her through the night. Yes, Henri was a good priest.

She told herself that over and over. It was only Henri and his church she spoke of, as she lay there through his absence, striving to crowd out all other memories, all other faces.

But she could not; and, suddenly flinging herself face downward, in utter abandonment of despair, she moaned, tearlessly. What use to try to deceive herself as she deceived Henri? She could not. The cross on her breast could not blot out that vow to Manitou. Her soul had been sold—traded to the Great Spirit for his life and his faith. That was done, and Henri did not know; he never would know. She must act a lie to him forever, if she lived; and death would be better—better.

She raised her face on her hands, and lay there in the dim dawn with a wonder in her heathenish heart as to why it was so evil a thing to stop the breath of the body when every breath was a prolongation of pain. When love dies,

what is left to live for? The beauty in the soul dies; the true life-beat of the heart dies; and if the steel or the arrow stops entirely its aching efforts, what then? The real life is dead—is dead!

Something moved under the deer-skin dress lying there in the gray dusk. It was within reach of her hand, and, without moving from where she lay, she brushed aside the fringed skirt and touched a living black body. In an instant its crested head darted forward and sunk its curved lances of death into the open palm of her hand.

It was the mate of the reptile whose life Dunbar had ended. It had followed to that height for its vengeance.

She shook it loose, but raised her hand high as her head to do it, it clung so; and then she did not heed where it moved to. An electric shock seemed tingling from that hand through all her veins; flashes of heat and cold shivering over her until even the gray walls she could touch, and the crimson heart on that moccasin, faded far away from her, barely visible in the half-light.

"I did not go to death, Henri," she protested, feebly—"it hunted me; and it is good." Tinkling bells sounded in her ears and shut out the sounds of the bird-calls. Strangely enough, they seemed to echo the words of that song she had sung and forgotten. Yes, they came to her ears clearly—

"Heart-snows are nigh
When love's bright leaves fall;
And they fall,
And they fall
On the grave of my dead;
On the grave
Of a life
That is dead, that is dead."

She tried to repeat the words in song as they came back

to her, but it was only the whisper of music that she uttered; a dimness of all things in sound or sense seemed closing around her, and she even smiled her content at it.

"It is good to sing as the true singers sing," she said, as to someone who was listening—"to sing true, and—die ere the false songs come to the heart. That is best, Henri. Love is like that—love—*Aei!* the cross!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

ON THUNDER MOUNTAIN.

THE dew yet lay in the shadowy places when Redney reached the summit of Thunder Mountain, and halted to look back, with the bitterness of contempt on his young face.

"They are all alike—the cursed whites!" he told himself; "kind and false. If he knew how her hand shook, and how her cheek flushed when I touched her, would he have knelt there beside her as I saw them last night? And if she knew all, would she think his rescue by some Indians was such a romantic thing, and be so anxious to start with him at once for the south country? May be. They'll go on all their lives like that, I s'pose, cheating each other, and stealing sweet words to whoever comes handy. Élouise couldn't have been like that if she tried. She was a fool, but she was honest; and it's just the honest fools that get left, like abandoned claims, whether it's on the mountains or in the camps."

He started on, picking his way through the scrub-brush.

He had never yet followed her up there, or seen exactly the home they had shared; but he remembered the location by that visit of Miss Della's to the edge of the terraced rock. He blamed himself passionately for not telling in the very beginning who the man was abiding there. If he had guessed how it would end —

Two people back in that camp he felt blue at leaving that morning; they were Milt and Clevents, who had called "*Klahowya!*" after him, but with no idea in their minds that High-Low would know him no more. He told himself that the rest down there he hated, and hated, and hated! Not the baby, of course, for the tears were in his eyes as he kissed it; and when good Mrs. Nannie laid her hand on his shoulder with a touch like a caress, he had fairly run from her. But the rest he knew he hated. He was going up on the mountain; he would find Élouise and take her far away toward the south, where the Indians of the churches and the schools lived. There they would live, out of the sight of the white aristocrats, who bring only sorrows to Indian hearts. All the wealth of their gold should never bind him to their service again.

So he told himself, so he would tell Élouise when he found her.

But he found first the strange dark snake, dead since the day before, and a little farther on, the headless body of its mate, that showed a faint motion when his foot touched it. Its head, as though twisted from its body, lay near, and, startled at the sight, he turned quickly around looking for the girl.

And in the shadow of the ancient dwelling he found her, sleeping the death-sleep for which the serpent had given the potion—the serpent whose kiss had proven more merciful than that of love.

And her resting-place was the arms of the Indian priest,

who bent his dark face over hers, saying Latin prayers, may be; anyway, he was speaking in the softest murmur of tones, and if he had not been a priest, Redney would have simply thought he was talking in some unknown tongue to the dead girl, often waiting as if for replies, and then continuing the tender monotone.

At first glance the boy thought he had something of white bound about his head; but when he heard the voice of the new-comer, and arose to his feet with her form clasped close, Redney saw that his hair was snow-white.

"She is mine now," he said. "Go follow the trail the others have left. I will find her a bed where the eagles nest. She belongs to them—they knew it long ago. She is gone from your life. She is mine now."

At the first words, low, intense, the boy feared he was mad, and the startling change in his appearance—that white crown above the dark face—strengthened the idea. But the tenderness of his speech to her moved him to sympathy, and he walked to them and laid his hand on her dead breast.

"She is mine too, father," and despite himself his voice trembled at the tardy avowal. "She was my sister."

"Her mother had no other child."

"But her father had. I never told her—I'm sorry now; but she was my sister."

"Sister—so she was to me," the priest murmured, sadly; "sister, child, and companion—so she should always have been. But it is over now. You are her kinsman; you then may see where her grave is made."

His low-toned words and strangely impressive tones awed Redney, who had never before stood in awe of anything human. Obediently he followed, while the priest alone carried dead Élouise up to the grotto on the heights.

The bench of stone served as her couch, where she lay

facing the south—that land of the wished-for life! Had she chosen, it must surely have been for that resting-place.

For the first time in Redney's life he knelt in the prayer for the dead, and heard an anthem of the holy church, as Father Henri's voice rolled out and upward in music he and Élouise had sung together in the old days when their hearts were as the hearts of children.

And then the two labored there on the summit while the sun dropped down and down to the very edge of their world, and its last beams lit the face of a tomb walled up where the grotto had looked out over the far green lands and silver-hued glaciers. A mound of stone in the form of a cross blocks the shelf in front of it. It is the only guard of her tomb.

And beside it the priest turned to the boy. "We part here. I go to the west, where the red death is—and you?"

"Wherever I can get away from the faces of white people; I'm tired of the camps. If *you* would need me—"

"You are her kinsman; if you wish, come."

And so they descended together to the valley and walked without separating toward the west.

Once as they crossed a stream where the water was as a mirror, the youth touched the priest's arm and pointed to the reflection of the hair whitened that one morning.

"It is the hand of God," he said. "I carried evil in my heart, and was a priest; hidden evil that my own eyes could not see. Then in one hour it was made plain to me. I had sinned. The mark is left to show I suffered. My life is left to make atonement."

CHAPTER XXV.

BACK TO THE WORLD.

No one wondered, least of all his *fiancée*, that Dunbar was anxious to leave the scenes where his health had—he said—been broken by sickness. He was asked remarkably few questions of his absence, except by Della, and the forty-eight hours from his return until they left High-Low together was a state of blissful content in all things to her. The summer had brought her a bona-fide romance of her own, and it circled about Dunbar as a halo. He was her Prince Charming, as he had been in her childish days. Everything had turned out just as she hoped, and the wedding was to be at once. The last birthday of her maidenhood was over—the nineteenth, for which they had waited.

All High-Low was on the banks as their canoes were pushed off. Dunbar looked a little pale and quiet, especially pale when Mr. Clevents, after shaking hands heartily with Miss Raeforth, put his hand in his pocket and did not offer it to the groom-elect. They looked at each other, but said nothing.

“Kind o’ bleached, ain’t he?” remarked one of the men, as the canoes left the shore, and Mr. Collins, who stood near, grinned.

“Not near so bleached as he looked and made me feel last night,” he answered. “It was moonlight, you know, an’ he was comin’ down off the mountain a tearin’; and white! he’ll never be whiter when he’s dead, and you’d better believe I was scared. It’s my notion that cut has left him loony.”

"What mountain was he on?" asked Mr. Clevents, and smiled without mirth when the man answered:

"Why, up on old Thunder, where there ain't any business to take anyone, 'specially at night."

"Well, loony or not, he's in luck, anyway."

And the man who was in luck skimmed with his sweet-heart over the proud bosom of the Columbia, and watched with tender eyes the childish beauty of her face, and told her truth and lies in those judicious installments known and practiced of all men under like interesting circumstances, all the while keeping his face turned down the river, the way of their future, and the place of their wedding.

A bundle lay at the girl's feet, and remembering Mr. Clevents had placed it there, telling her it was a souvenir of the Selkirks, she opened it eagerly, and laughed with delight.

"My Indian dress! Oh, Neil, isn't it lovely? And the moccasins, look at them! I never hoped to see them when they told me that priest had taken the little squaw away. How kind of Mr. Clevents, and I do wonder how he got them. I asked Redney about them, and he just walked away and I never got sight of him again—he was so queer sometimes. Well, I wanted that pretty Indian girl to take East, but, as I can't get her, I'm satisfied to have these, and they are beauties; don't you think so? Look at the pretty red hearts on the moccasins."

She put them in his hands, and he did not know what he replied. He held them, and assented to the beauties she found in them, but saw more than she did. He saw the one border of beads he had been allowed to sew on, and it was crooked; he saw a little mark where a drop of blood had fallen from the finger of Élouise and stained the white leather; he saw the border of fringe he had cut as her pupil; he saw—was he to see these on the feet of his wife and

listen over and over to her light-hearted chatter of them? His hand dropped over the edge of the canoe, when Della caught it.

"Why, Neil! I would not have them wet for anything. You silly boy, did you think they needed stretching? Give them to me, and tell me some Indian stories of the river or mountains. Don't you know any—not even a canoe-song?"

A canoe-song! What was that song sung that night on the heights, the song of the boat that should bear him away? He told himself he must get over this weakness that came with memory. He would try and repeat it.

"The boat is built,
And the water sings
To you. Dear heart, good-by!
It will bear you far,
On its tireless wings,
From me. Good-by! good-by!"

"Oh, Neil, how sad that air is!" breathed his little sweetheart, and slipped her hand into his.

And then from the high wall of green above them the wide-spread wings of an eagle beat the air, darting toward the water for an instant, and then changing its course sailed over their heads, with the wild call that is so startling when it comes close.

And it had surely startled Dunbar, for his face grew very white; his hands were trembling.

"It was only an eagle," he assured the girl, who heeded it the least of the two; and then he turned nervously to the oarsmen.

"Row faster—faster, can't you, and get us out of this wilderness; we are barely creeping along."

The men smiled at each other—it was so natural for the road to seem long when a man goes to his wedding; and

they dipped the paddles in the singing water, and darted downward as if indeed borne on wings.

And high up over the wilderness the call of the eagle sounded—*ai-ee! ai-ee!* and then drifted into silence.

THE END.

